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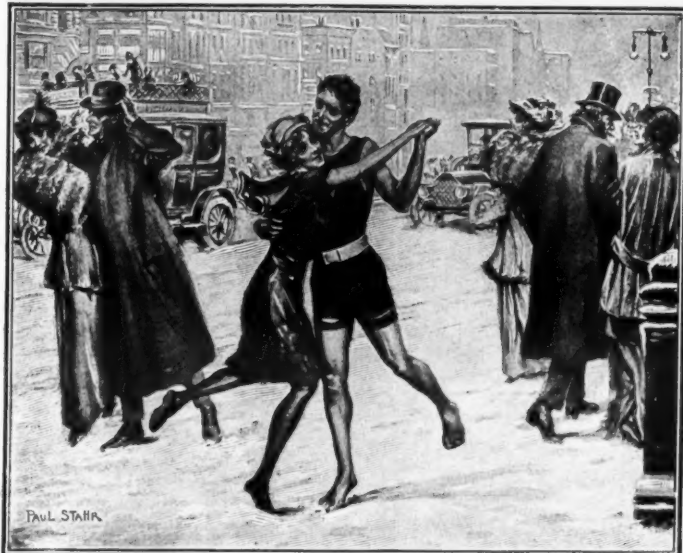


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AINSLEE'S

THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS

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AINSLEE'S

VOL. XXXIII.

JUNE, 1914.

No. 5.



CHAPTER I.

DICK THURSTON stood outside the post office at Silver Horn and reread his letter from the girl back East. Its message was none so long, and quite clearly stated; yet it took a third and even a fourth reading to drive the truth home, to rout incredulity, to kill faith.

His world was falling in ruins about him; instinctively he turned his face away to the lonely mountains. Hours later, when he came back from blindly tramping the rugged heights, he staggered, physically spent and sick with warring passions, into the solitary "hotel," and ordered food and drink. The first he scarcely tasted, but his glass was replenished again and again.

Opening his burning eyes, Thurston sat up, blinking owlishly at a broad shaft of sunshine on the floor. Presently it struck him that it was shining in at the wrong window.

"Unless I've slept the clock around," he argued aloud.

But the sound of his voice brought fuller consciousness; sickening recollection followed fast, and everything became clear—up to his third glass of whisky. Beyond that, all was blank.

Evidently instinct and a knowing horse had brought him safely home.

Without rising, he thrust his hand into an inner pocket and brought to light the letter, over which once more he ran his eyes, then he cast its rent and crumpled fragments from him. Next he jerked a small velvet case from the same pocket, wrenched it open, and sent a circlet of yellow gold spinning across the floor. Then, staggering dizzily to a corner of the room, he thrust his burning head under the cooling flow of a water tap. His brain clearer, a new thought rushed into it. What of the fourteen hundred dollars he had drawn from the local bank just before claiming his mail? Nervous fingers, searching his breast pocket, drew forth a shabby wallet—empty.

This last blow was met in stoical silence. With set, grim face, the young man made and drank some strong coffee, then started for the stable. There

was a certain dull relief in finding the latter securely closed, and Tantrum, though bearing evidences of hard riding, comfortably munching in his stall. He lifted his head with a forgiving nicker at sight of his master, who nodded as to a human.

"Well, old boy, I'm glad I treated you better than I did myself. Pity you can't tell me where I flung away my cash."

"I can tell you," chirped a clear, treble voice unexpectedly.

Thurston wheeled, to meet a pair of bright eyes peering down at him from a stack of hay. Then a slender brown hand flung forth a soiled paper, which fell at the astonished man's feet.

"That's your receipt. I kept it for you."

"My receipt?" Thurston's bemused brain could only echo heavily the strange words flung against it, but automatically he stooped to lift the dirty sheet. As if acting in the nightmare he conceived must be galloping him through this new, chaotic world, he read it aloud slowly:

"Received from Richard Thurston, fourteen hundred and fifty dollars, cash payment in full for value received.

"Signed. R. STOUT.

"Silver Horn, October 6, 1900."

"Payment in full for value received!" he repeated, vacuously staring. "Now, who the devil is R. Stout? And what is the value received?"

All at once red rage gripped him; he lifted an appalling scowl to the pale face glimmering in the dusk of the haymow, and flung out the query a second time. When still no answer came, he gave a swift spring, thrust out a sinewy hand, and jerked to the floor a slender lad clad in shabby blue jeans and worn moccasins. The youngster's big gray eyes stared up at his towering captor with the pathetic courage of some small wild animal, lips close pressed and nostrils quivering, a tumble

of dark hair falling over his thin, tanned face.

"The truth!" urged the angry man, shaking the slight form.

"It isn't my fault! You would do it! I tried to make you understand, but you were too drunk."

Thurston had no time then to heed the prick of shame; he only reiterated harshly:

"The truth! Tell me the truth of this business. First, who is R. Stout?"

"A man you insisted on giving your money to last night, on the trail from Silver Horn."

"I insisted! Humph! The *value received* quoted here," shaking the peculiar "receipt" viciously, "must have seemed very desirable. Pray what was it? And did Mr. R. Stout leave it also in your charge for delivery?"

Only miserable silence for answer, but the boy's wild eyes yearned toward the open door. Sudden compunction seized Dick Thurston; this was such a forlornly inadequate victim on which to vent the rage within him.

"Come now, boy! You're evidently only a pawn in some one's game. Tell me the whole story. Where did I make R. Stout's acquaintance, and how did I come to empty my wallet into his hands?"

Taking heart of grace from this milder address, the youngster drew a deep breath, and began:

"Just about sunset last night, Stout and I were camped near the trail leading to Silver Horn, not far from here. He was what he called trying to knock a little sense into my head—with a quirt—when you came riding by. You were drunk, very drunk—but still human—a dull red rose and ebbed in his hearer's face—"and you interfered." A malicious smile flashed across the thin face. "And so R. Stout began dancing to his own instrument. You laid on well, Mr. Man, so well that even I came very near feeling satisfied.

If you'd let it end there, you'd have probably got off none the worse. But when he cried for mercy, you let up, and began to ask questions, and—and then it happened."

"What happened?"

"He took your money."

"And what did I get for it? Only the satisfaction of thrashing a scoundrel? A pretty high price——" A look checked his angry sarcasm. "No? That was not all, then? What else?"

Distressful color mounted in the waif's pale face.

"Me," he whispered.

Thurston stared hard, then broke into a great gust of ironic laughter.

The big gray eyes filled; the child burst out sobbingly: "I tried to stop you! I did my best. I knew—I knew you'd be sorry to-day. But when—when he saw your money, and you offered—— He swore he'd take it out of me later, and—and then you wouldn't listen to anything I could say."

But Thurston's laughter had died away as suddenly as it had risen.

"There, there! You're not to blame—— But I want to meet Mr. Stout again badly. He's locating in Silver Horn?"

"He meant to, but he's no fool. You'll never see him in these parts again."

"Humph! How came you in his hands?"

The lad hesitated, finally blurting out defiantly:

"He says he's my father, but I don't believe it——"

Then he tottered and swayed where he stood, and but for Dick's swift movement would have fallen.

"You're done up! What's the matter?"

"I'm—hun—gry," whispered the child.

Dick Thurston grabbed him up in his strong arms and started for the house.

"When did you eat last?" queried the host, shaking up a pan of sizzling bacon, and noting how the slim little hands shook as they balanced a steaming mug of coffee.

"Yesterday morning."

Dick swore softly, and with discreet regard for the youth of his hearer.

"Say, kid, I hope I laid on that quirt good and proper?"

The kid nodded.

"I reckon his shoulders match mine this evening," he grinned cheerfully.

When his appetite was satisfied, the boy lay back wearily in his chair and fell asleep. The man, his transient diversion past, fell once more back into black and bitter musings, even while he busied himself in attending to Tantrum's needs. The red-faced sun had slipped behind the distant mountain barrier, and the lonely prairie below was darkling when, returning from his task, Thurston found his recent purchase sitting, a small, huddled shape, on the doorstep; a shape that uncurred itself to a height of some five feet two of blue jeans, and eyed anxiously the man's moody face.

"Mr. Thurston, I'd like to have a square understanding to begin with."

Thurston passed a hand across his weary eyes.

"What about?"

"About my—being here. I'm nearly seventeen years old, and when I'm not starved, I can do a lot of work. I'll save you more than what I eat costs."

The man smiled sarcastically.

"About fourteen hundred and fifty dollars' worth, kid?"

The gray eyes sparkled angrily.

"Perhaps even that—in time—by hiding your bottle!" the boy snapped.

Stung to swift wrath at this impertinence, Dick raised his hand.

"That's right! Hit me! It's the only way a man need argue with any one weaker than himself!" taunted the youngster, without giving back.

The hand fell harmless.

"If that's the line of talk you handed out to R. Stout, I don't wonder so much at the course of training he applied."

"Oh, no!" The boy's voice was bitter. "Be sure I never stood up to him. I'll meet a human being as he treats me—good or bad. But when it comes to brute beasts like him, one can only set one's teeth and take what comes."

Dick laughed mirthlessly.

"Well, don't impose too much on any one's human nature," he warned; "for there's always a risk of digging up the brute. Now it's time you turned in. You may sleep yonder to-night."

He pointed to a narrow couch opposite his own, but the boy shook his head.

"I'll sleep in the hay, where I did last night, if you'll let me have a blanket."

"You'll do nothing of the kind. I don't permit strangers in my barn. You'll sleep here, as I said."

But the lad was obstinate.

"I'd rather sleep on the ground out of doors than in the room with any one else," he persisted.

Thurston glared in exasperation.

"It seems to me, youngster," he remarked, with misleading quiet, "you're assuming an unnaturally large amount of importance for your likes and dislikes. I'll call your bluff. You may either sleep yonder, like a Christian, or out on the ground."

Somewhat to his grim amusement, the boy marched to the disputed bed, caught up a blanket therefrom, and presently was lying, snugly wrapped, on the dry, warm ground under a clump of young birch trees.

CHAPTER II.

The next morning at breakfast, the two so oddly come together exchanged few words until Thurston, thrusting back his chair, remarked abruptly:

"I'd like to know something more definite about you. What's your name? Where did you come from? What reason have you for doubting this man Stout's claim to be your father?"

Meeting the gloomy eyes opposite frankly, the lad answered categorically:

"He called me Frank. For nearly two years I've been tramping from place to place, nearly always in the open, wherever some restless whim of R. Stout's led."

"And before that?"

"I was brought up by the sisters in a convent near Monterey, where I was left when a baby of apparently a year old. No one claimed me until nearly two years ago, when this man Stout came with a tale of having hunted for me all these years since, as he swore, I'd been stolen from home. The sisters were doubtful, but he brought out some sort of proof, and threatened going to law, so they let me go."

Dick Thurston had flung off all abstraction, and had been keenly studying the face and figure opposite him, while the waif was speaking. He now pounced swiftly upon one point of the story.

"You say you grew up in a convent near Monterey? What order of sisters takes boys to bring up?"

The gray eyes darted affrightedly at his stern face; the shabby little figure cowered deep in its chair.

"It's true, then? You're a girl—not a boy?"

Only a dumb stare answered.

"What is the name of the convent?"

Still no reply.

"You must tell me where it is, so that I may return you there without delay. And, believe me, I'll put it out of R. Stout's power to regain possession of you."

But the obstinate look was dawning once more in the pale young face.

"I will not go back there."

"Why not? It's the only safe place for a girl in your circumstances."

"They are dead—those white-robed nuns!" she burst out stormily. "I—if I must stay alive—I will *live*!"

"Do you call the past two years—life?"

She shuddered, but held to her position.

"That's past. You freed me from that awful nightmare, and as soon as I've earned my freedom—paid you back the money he robbed you of—I'll have my chance!"

"Your chance? For what?"

"To live."

"To live!" His lips twisted in a sneering smile. "But let that pass. Your future is—*your* future, and has nothing to do with me. Were you a boy, I might have kept you by me until some opening occurred. But a girl? Apart from the impossibility of it, I'd as soon harbor the devil in person under my roof as a woman. No, listen!" harshly forestalling interruption, "I'll see you returned in safety to the convent, and when you come of legal age, you'll have naught to fear from Stout, and may seek life along whatever road it pleases you."

But apparently neither his bitterness nor his arguments had impressed his unbidden guest. She leaned forward, her slight hands gripping the arms of her chair with a passion as intense as any he had shown.

"Now, listen to me: I—won't—go—back—to—that—jail—of—a—convent! It was hard enough before I knew what the big out-of-doors meant. Now—I'd smother! I couldn't bear it! I won't bear it! Drunk or sober, you bought me, you took the responsibility of me. You boasted to that brute, and afterward to me, that I should never lack home or friend while you lived. Are you going to back down now? Are you less human sober than drunk? I'll do my part; I'll work early and late;

I'll eat barely enough to give me strength to do it. I'll help in every way to save what I unintentionally cost you, and I won't quit till the last copper is paid."

She paused for lack of breath, and Thurston broke out impatiently:

"The real question is not of my wishes or of yours. You force me to put into brutal words the impossibility of such a course, for the sake of your woman's name. There's not another woman within miles—you'd meet with nothing but men for maybe months at a time."

But the innocence that was also ignorance stubbornly combatted a wisdom it could not comprehend.

"What harm could that do? Besides, no one but you need know I'm not a boy——"

"You talk like a fool!" Thurston cut in roughly. "Even if your disguise weren't as transparent as gauze, are you prepared to meet and chum with the ranchmen who are my friends, and mingle with rough farm hands as one of themselves? I'm an artist, and live here alone, except for occasional visits from men like that——"

She was hard pressed, but not yet beaten, and she interrupted with a new idea:

"I could wear a dress and be your housekeeper," she proffered eagerly, but shrank before his glowering eyes. Rising, he leaned across the table and spoke with a deadly slowness and emphasis:

"I tell you I won't have a damned woman under my roof! There isn't one in the world worth the powder it would take to blow her into the hell where they all belong!"

But the sight of the child's pale fright brought him abruptly to himself. Controlling the passion that voiced the sickness of his soul, he ended with quiet decision:

"You're too young and untaught in the ways of the world you're so eager to know to realize the meaning of what you propose. I am, in a sense, your guardian, and you must accept my word as law."

The girl eyed him in sullen despair.

"What are you going to do with me?"

"I'll take you over to Sioux Pass and put you into the care of a priest there I know, and he will return you to the convent, where you'll have suitable protection until you grow to womanhood."

"And your money?"

He shrugged wearily.

"Is gone. Have you no suitable—er—garments?"

A first vague stirring of self-consciousness tinged her thin cheek faintly.

"My bag is in the haystack where you found me."

He went out, and she, sitting staring somberly, made no move or comment when he presently returned, bearing a worn canvas bag which he dropped beside her.

"I'll be busy in the barn for an hour or so," he said casually, and vanished again.

The girl soon completed her transformation, and in a shabby sailor suit of blue serge looked nearer fifteen than the seventeen years she claimed.

As Thurston still delayed his coming, she succumbed to a natural instinct for neatness and order, and restlessly began moving about, straightening up the room. She washed and set away the simple breakfast things, then examined with interest the many sketches and studies adorning the roughcast walls, and apparently forming the overflow from an adjoining apartment, the door to which stood ajar, inviting curiosity. Peeping within, she saw a big, barnlike room, the north end of which was formed of glass and framed a marvelous panorama of blue, blue sky,

golden earth, and far waves of purpled hills rising to ghost mountains in the distance. These walls, like those in the living room, were covered with brilliant or somber studies of Nature in all her moods amid the mountain fastnesses.

But of all that her delighted eyes beheld, the young girl was drawn most resistlessly by the single portrait in the room. On a big easel, where the light from the north fell best, stood a large canvas from which glowed a radiantly beautiful girl's face. The artist's brush might have been dipped in liquid sunshine to secure the high lights of the amber-shadowed hair, the luminous clearness of the golden-brown eyes. Across the slender grace of the white shoulders a transparent scarf, like in color to the topaz-hued drapery Carlo Dolci used for his St. Cecilia, was caught by a knot of richly purple pan-sies.

Gazing, wide-eyed, the little waif's heart throbbed in sudden hot rebellion.

"You've got more than your share, you yellow witch!" she whispered. "You've had all this wide, lovely, free world to live in; not a gloomy, silent, old garden inside thick stone walls. It's not fair! It's not fair!"

This little foundling of the convent had no knowledge of hothouse human growths.

She returned to the living room, where she thrust an inquiring broom into dusty corners, bringing to light a cloud of witnesses that Thurston was certainly in need of a housekeeper. Presently there rolled in sight a small circlet of very yellow gold. Picking it up and examining it with feminine curiosity, she laid it on a table, and gathered together the fragments of torn paper Thurston had tossed aside in fury. These she cast into the fire, pausing to watch them burn.

As she stood thus, on one scrap of the perfumed sheet, writhing and twist-

ing in the flame, a name suddenly stared out at her in a woman's hand:

Frances.

"How funny!" she said half aloud. "My name!"

Then she wandered listlessly to the open door, staring out over the broad earth, down the rugged slope, and far beyond to the mountain rim of the world. A brisk, soft wind came racing fresh and free out of the west, and as she met its living rush, the girl's pulses leaped to rebellion anew; she wrung her slender hands in an anguish of impotent revolt.

"I can't go back! I won't go back!" she sobbed, and sped suddenly toward the barn.

CHAPTER III.

It was three days later when, with a creaking of leather and a jingling of spurs, Joe Ruddock swung from his saddle and stood in the doorway of Dick Thurston's bungalow. His cheery voice rang out in surprised challenge:

"What in blazes does this mean?"

Then he swept his hat from his head in embarrassed deference, at sight of the girlish figure that rose into view from behind the couch on which Dick Thurston lay with closed eyes, the white bandage about his head emphasizing the bright fever spots on his drawn face. At sound of the loud voice, his eyes opened, and partial recognition beat against opposing delirium.

"Joe," he muttered thickly. "Good old Joe! He'll stand by— He'll stan— Frances! Frances! Frances!" His voice broke in a wail of terror, of entreaty.

The slim girl bent over him, laying a cool hand on his hot forehead.

"I'm here, dear! Frances is here right by you," she murmured soothingly.

"Sit by me—so—close! close! And

put your hand in mine." Then wildly: "The ring! The ring, Frances! You've lost the ring!"

"No, no, dear, it's not lost." She motioned frantically toward a near-by table, and Joe Ruddock swiftly seized therefrom a circlet of yellow gold and slipped it into her hand, while the clear, treble voice crooned on: "You know it's a little loose, and so I have to lay it by when I'm busy. See? Here it is, safe and sound as when you put it on. Try and sleep again."

But while he stroked and fondled the hand on which the band now shone bravely, fear did not loose its grip of the sick man's brain. Pointing to the figure of his friend standing speechless by, he asked:

"Who's that?"

The girl's gray eyes summoned, and Joe pressed near, to bend his honest face above the other.

"You know me, Dick, don't ye? Joe? Joe Ruddock? I've come to help ye get well."

A flash of joy shot from the dimmed eyes.

"Joe! You'll help, won't you? Don't let them take her from me! My wife — You'll keep them away, Joe! She's mine, my wife! My wife! And —whom—God—hath—joined—"

As suddenly as it had risen, his raving fell into incoherent mutterings, followed by coma. His grasp relaxed on the girl's hand; his eyes closed.

Then, gently rising, she beckoned Joe Ruddock outside the door, Joe moving after her in a daze of astonishment. Once outside, she plunged into swift speech.

"Bring a doctor as quickly as you can. I don't know just what happened to him, for I found him lying unconscious in the stable——"

"That da—— 'Twas that blasted Tantrum, I bet! He's a treacherous brute at times, and Dick forgets his

devilishness in 'between!" Joe exclaimed. "How long ago?"

"Three days. I brought him around enough so he managed to get to the house, but he's been like this, or worse, ever since."

Joe had been tightening his girths, and now swung himself into the saddle.

"You'll not be long?" There were dark rings about the gray eyes, a pathetic droop to the young lips.

"I'll send a messenger from my place, and be back here in an hour myself, Mis' Thurston. Doc ought to git here in less'n three. Git out o' this, Ante!"

And Ante, a piebald broncho, "got" so swiftly that both horse and rider were speedily a vanishing speck, while the girl, Frances, left staring over the unexpected title bestowed upon her, chuckled like a naughty schoolboy at the big stranger's mistake, then whirled back to her patient.

Renewing the cold cloths on the burning head, she resumed her watch, while a swift current of new thoughts went racing through her brain. Question and answer, pro and con. A riot of expressions meantime chased each other across her face, blotting out for the time all signs of strain and fatigue.

There was no text of all those taught her by the patient, placid nuns applicable to the present situation. Explanations would be more than awkward. Why, then, would it not be best to let the mistake, grounded on the sick man's delirious claim, pass for truth until he himself was able to set it right?

Ignorance of the world's conventions made the decision comparatively easy. She resolved to let the artist do all the explaining, and in the meantime—her tired little face puckered with mischief—she would play the rôle thrust upon her with dignity. "Pretending" had always been a passion with the lonely child, whose narrow life had broadened thus in imagined glories, so

it was nothing new for her to assume another's personality. That these assumptions hitherto had been those of saint and martyr in no whit barred her now from attempting a worldly part; on the contrary, it lent the new outlook piquancy.

A moan from the sick man brought her to more serious thoughts.

"It's lucky the infirmarian gave me some useful lessons," she reflected. "If Sister Felicia had had her way, I'd have learned nothing but prayers and needlework, and a lot of use they'd be to me now!"

"Frances! Frances!" moaned the sick man.

"Yes, dear," crooned the false Frances, relishfully alive to the properly tender note in her voice, and pleased with her new facility in the use of unaccustomed phrases. And Dick once more sank into a lethargy from which he did not rouse until a rapid thud of hoofbeats was followed by the entrance of Joe Ruddock and a portly, brisk, little man, round of figure, twinkly of eye, cheery of voice.

"Met doc on the road, Mis' Thurston!" exclaimed the former, then presented the latter in due form.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated the doctor, shaking hands vigorously and cleverly hiding his amazement at sight of this unformed, childish-looking bride. "Bless my soul! Nice kind of a honeymoon!"

Then he put keen, swift questions, while he examined the patient, and nodded approval of Frances' ministry. Finally he beamed through his spectacles, noting the signs of strain on the girl's white face.

"Now, my dear young lady, the next thing is for you to go off duty, and try to forget that such a person as Dick Thurston exists. Joe and I are on the job, and you need a good, long rest."

Frances was ready to drop with fatigue, her eyes were half closed, but

with the instinct of a true artiste, she clung to the perfection of her rôle.

"But if he should need me, doctor? Sometimes he fancies we're—we're being parted, and nothing quiets him but —" Her gray eyes anxiously finished the sentence.

"Quite natural! Quite natural! But he can better spare you for a few hours now than for the rest of his life," with a gallant bow that stirred the tired girl inwardly to impish mirth. "You've had all the strain you can stand at present. Dick would be the first to send you away."

The truth of this last being indisputable, Frances was almost betrayed into unseemly mirth, and quickly disappeared into a small room which she had appropriated and reclaimed from storage purposes by the introduction of a cot and chair from the studio.

Many anxious and weary hours followed, but the doctor and Joe Ruddock proved themselves men and brothers in the widest and most comforting sense, one or the other being always on hand, and thus relieving the slim little creature whom they amazingly accepted as Dick Thurston's wife from all practical care of the sick man. The girl, reveling for the first time in her life in the freedom of untrammelled action, took delighted control of the house, and of one Ching Loo, whom Joe detached from his own bunk-house culinary department, in spite of the vigorous protest of his hands.

But many an hour the supposititious bride was compelled to hover over Dick's pillow, stilling the wailing "Frances! Frances!" with the touch of her hand, or suffering the sick man's hot fingers to caress the magic circlet on her finger.

In the end, the little actress became so engrossed in her part that she forgot it was a part, and lived it. Self-consciousness was quite banished, and even being addressed as "Mrs. Thurs-

ton" failed to bring the mischievous spark to the girl's eyes. There were days and nights of wearing anxiety, and all the unused store of womanhood concealed in the little waif's heart was not too much for this first earnest struggle of her life. Daily the doctor and Joe Ruddock repented them of their first hasty conclusions regarding Dick Thurston's—presumed—choice.

"Ain't bigger'n a minute, but, oh, my!" was Joe's admiring report to a choice circle at Silver Horn, whither he had gone on an errand.

CHAPTER IV.

Weak and spent, but sane, Dick Thurston opened his eyes, and tried to brush away the absurd and disconcerting vision they seemed to behold. Finding his hand too heavy to lift, he whispered something inarticulate. Whereupon the vision rose, peered at him, and vanished; only to reappear, however, to slide a hand under his head and hold a cup to his lips. Drinking therefrom, he was just going to ask a pointed question, when his traitorous eyelids fell again, and sleep caught him.

From then on, it seemed to his querulous inner self, he lived through æons of time, wherein he woke, found an officious person ever waiting to thrust a cup or spoon between his lips, and to watch with fiendish delight his unequal fight with a perfect demon of sleep, and dropped back into unconsciousness. All efforts on his part to ask questions with the absurdly attenuated fragment of voice he found at his disposal were met by imbecile smiles and, "Go to sleep, old man!" from Joe Ruddock or Doc Shepard; or, worse still, by maternal pats and coos of, "Don't try to talk," from that impudent female baggage whose face was strange, yet vaguely familiar. Her he grew hourly to resent more and more, because, as he weakly argued within

himself: "Some day I'll punch Joe's and doc's heads; but you—can't—punch—a—girl——" Then he was asleep again.

But there came a day when—still weak, but alertly grasping life again with both hands—he wakened suddenly, to find himself alone, and some one talking outside the door.

"Good-by, Mrs. Thurston. Tell Dick from me he's a darned lucky fellow! I'll drop in again in a few days, though all he wants now is feeding up. Sorry I can't stay till Joe gets back, but he won't be long, now, and a smashed thigh can't wait. It's twelve miles to Turner's, as it is. Good-by! And be sure you give your husband my message."

"Good-by, doctor!" answered a clear, girlish voice, with bubbles of laughter sparkling through it. Then came the thud of horse's feet, and a second later Frances, peering around the door to make sure her pseudo-husband slept, met a pair of eyes glaring at her from Dick's gaunt, unshaven face, and at once realized that the time for explanations was at hand. The little doctor's brisk voice had excellent carrying qualities.

A queer feeling of panic seized her for a moment, as when in the convent some lawless prank had brought about an interview with the mother superior. But the next second the imp of mirth danced in her gray eyes; she waved an airy hand.

"I know just how mad you feel, but you must have your breakfast first and explode afterward. I'll be back in the stroke of a bell."

She was gone, to reappear in a short time with an improvised tray; and involuntarily Dick's wrath and amaze weakened for the moment as with the rampant appetite of a fever convalescent he sniffed greedily the steam of fragrant coffee and anticipated the contents of a covered dish.

When, to his further humiliation, he had been fed like a babe by this unspeakable young person, whose face showed no trace of a fitting abasement, he gathered his forces, and sternly opened the case:

"Will you kindly explain this—ah—compromising—situation? Who are you, and how—how have you dared represent yourself as—as——"

"Your wife?" she chuckled, as he choked into silence. "Then you don't remember yet what happened just before you were hurt? Never mind! The doctor said you'd come out all right. But I'll explain my part, if you don't think it'll be too tiring?"

An impatient frown waived her doubts, so she rehearsed briefly the beginning of their acquaintance, and then continued:

"Evidently Providence didn't mean to let you off your responsibility; for you were in such a hurry to get rid of me that you stirred up Tantrum's bad blood, and he must have kicked you on the head, doctor and Joe Ruddock say. It was all I could do to get you to the house, after bringing you to your senses out in the barn. When we got here, you tumbled off in another faint, and then woke up, raving. I had a lively time for three days." She nodded her head vigorously. "I didn't dare leave you to go for help, even if I'd known where to go. Luckily, Sister Josephine, the infirmarian at the convent, had taught me some things about sick people, so I did all I could till that blessed Mr. Ruddock happened to come, and he fetched the doctor, and you'll be as good as new in no time, now."

She beamed congratulations, rubbing her slim, brown hands over her shabby serge knees like a boy; but her listener didn't beam back. She had evidently proved herself a very useful young person, but that did not excuse the appalling situation she had somehow

created. His wrath waxed hot within him.

"I'm deeply in your debt," he acknowledged distastefully; "but still more deeply in the dark as to the extraordinary delusion Doctor Shepard seems laboring under."

"Mercy! The reverend mother herself never used longer words!" commented the culprit irrelevantly. Then she burst into a gale of laughter.

"How mad you are!" she chortled, wiping her eyes. "And yet it's all your own fault!" she went on triumphantly. "You see——"

She gathered her knees into her embrace, and leaned forward with dancing gray eyes fixed on his disconcerted visage, while she recited at length the details of his delirious fancy.

"I figured out," she confided to him, "that you're awfully fond of some girl with my name—Frances." Dick started. "I was named for St. Francis, you know. Not that the saint part ever struck in any," with a whimsical grimace. "And when you insisted to the others that I was your wife, and cried for Frances, Frances, every minute I was out of sight, why, it seemed to me the best thing all around was to pretend I was the Frances you wanted. It couldn't hurt her, and it kept you quiet."

"And you?"

"Me? It couldn't matter to me, surely. I'm *not* your wife, and it's really been lots of fun."

Dick's brain was in a whirl. What manner of girl was this? He closed his eyes for a moment, while the young voice, with its rippling undertone of laughter, ran on:

"I love to pretend! I never could have lived all those years in the convent without bursting, if it hadn't been for pretending; so it was easy enough to put myself in the place of a girl who cared lots for some one. Sometimes, when you were very bad, it really pre-

tended itself; I didn't even have to think about it. One night"—the big gray eyes fairly hypnotized Dick—"when you were at the very worst, and that dear, funny little doctor even forgot to joke, and you lay awfully still—still as death—but yet clung to my hand, it seemed to me I was just fighting—fighting—fighting for you against some great black thing that was trying to drag you away. And at last I knew I had you safe! The thing had given up—had let you go!"

Dick stared at the girl's vivid little face in silence, until, with a shaky laugh, Frances came to herself, and brushed a hand across her forehead. With the gesture, the spell was broken. Dick's bony hand was outstretched; his voice, hoarse and broken, gasped:

"Where did you get that ring? How dare—how have you dared to wear it?"

Hastily stripping it from her finger, the girl faltered out, with the first embarrassment she had shown:

"Oh, I do beg your pardon! I found it on the floor, that first day, and put it on the table, yonder. But when you were out of your head, you kept crying out for it, and forced me to wear it. Truly—truly—I wouldn't have put it on, else. And then I forgot."

Like a shy child, she dropped it into his relaxed hand, but he was lying back with closed eyes and a curious, drawn look upon his thin face. A door had suddenly swung ajar, and he remembered—the letter.

"Leave me alone a while," he muttered. And she slipped away, all her childish gayety quenched at sight of his look.

But orders were orders, and in an hour she tapped and entered, bearing a cup of broth, which he accepted silently. Then, as she was departing with the empty cup, he spoke hastily, avoiding her eyes:

"You've evidently been a friend in need, and I—feel under obligations for

it. For both our sakes, I prefer you should allow this—a—ridiculous mistake—to remain uncorrected until—I am able to—to think what is best to be done. You must take my word for it that there is more to it than can be explained after the freakish fashion that seems to appeal to you."

She looked at him uncertainly.

"You won't take advantage and try to sneak me back to the convent?"

"You shall have free choice—to return or not."

"All right," she agreed blithely; and not long after he heard her singing a fragment from an old Spanish mass. But there was a worldly lilt and sparkle in her rendering that the composer had never put there.

It set itself to the bitter memories surging in the man's mind—memories of that joyous ride into Silver Horn, where he had intended making arrangements for a two months' visit back East, which he had hoped might end in his marriage with Frances Blair, memories of—the letter—the letter that had tossed his freedom back to him, with words of her immediate marriage to a millionaire of sixty-five.

When at length he doggedly set himself to forget, and tried to grapple with the problem of this other Frances, his tired brain balked. So for the present he pushed it aside—schooled himself to meet the situation as it hourly unfolded. Shielding himself from Joe Ruddock's facetiousness behind the languor of convalescence, he was forced to let the friendly tongue wag as it would on the subject of the girl's grit and resourcefulness; qualities that had completely won the youthful rancher.

"An' the dignity of her!" the big man chuckled. "You know, Dick, the missus only measures up tall beside a pint o' cider, but, gee whillikens! if you'd 'a' seen her squash Big Tom one day when he came ridin' up half loaded, and bent on seein' you! I tried to get it into his

thick head that quiet was the order, since you'd just fell into your first sleep; but Tom, he wouldn't listen, and I was just drawin' my fist, reluctant, to let him have it full in the jaw, when out whirls the missus, them gray eyes o' hern shootin' sparks. She walks right up to that hulk, and, gee! she looked six foot high as she points to his horse and says, in a voice low, but like a sluice o' ice water:

"'Get into that saddle,' says she, 'and ride back to where you came from, and stay there till you're in a fit state to mix with humans. Go!' And Tom he never lets a peep, but clambered up, and lit out like Satan was behind."

The doctor, too, added his meed when he dropped in on his twenty-mile circuit. A mist dimmed his spectacles as he described to the supposedly adoring bridegroom poor Frances' appearance after her plucky three days' fight single-handed. He thought it quite natural that his listener should shade his pale face with his hand during the recital, and would have popped from his chair as if dynamited could he have glanced into the mind before him, where, instead of worshipping affection, something very like detestation lay. For Richard Thurston saw only one opening out of the coil in which he found himself; and repugnance grew within him hourly at thought of it.

CHAPTER V.

The painter's first lucid request had been to have the door of his studio locked, and the key hung near his bed. As soon as he was able to totter about the room on legs which he regarded with angry derision, and Joe's own affairs had limited his attentions to a daily call, he took the key from its nail one morning and remained shut up in his workroom for a couple of hours.

Frances from time to time had wondered uneasily at his deferring the talk

she knew was impending, and longed to have it over, to know his decision. That evening it came.

The girl was darnning one of her few garments, and, absorbed in her occupation, started at the abrupt command:

"Tell me how you put in the many months you spent with that man Stout."

Her brows drew together.

"Wandering all over the West, from Oregon to Southern California, and apparently hunting for some one he wanted to find," she returned tersely.

"How did you live? What kind of acquaintances did you make?"

"Acquaintances? The only time I ever spoke to a stranger was once in a train, when an old lady asked me if I was going far, and I said I didn't know. R. Stout came bustling up and took me into another car. Then he told me if I ever spoke to a stranger again, he'd—he'd use a strap over my shoulders."

Dick swore softly. She looked a frail slip of a thing for such brutal handling.

"But his friends? Didn't you meet any of them?"

"Never. We were constantly on the move, and he seemed to avoid people. As I said, he seemed to be hunting for some one. Sometimes we went miles on a railway—sometimes on foot—only to start in an opposite direction as soon as he had used a telephone for a few minutes. Always, before setting out, he would be eager and fairly good-natured, but he always left ugly and disappointed. Occasionally when we were camping along the road, strangers would happen along, and I'd fall asleep long before they stopped playing cards. When he was good-natured the next morning, I got to know he had won their money; when he wasn't——" An expressive lift to her eyebrows.

"Fine company for a young girl!"

"Well, you see, they thought I was a boy. He made me pack my clothes,

and wear the things I had on when—when I came here. I hated it at first, until I remembered I'd need my own things when I ran away."

"You meant to run away, then?"

"Oh, yes!" emphatically. "I was always watching my chance, but he seemed to guess it, and I was getting desperate, when you came along."

Her listener was silent a while, reflecting on what had followed his entrance, and presently Frances went on:

"Two days before, he had been in a great state of excitement, and we started in a hurry for Denver. Half-way there, he bought a newspaper, and I thought he'd have a fit over something he saw in it. He turned back in the blackest rage I'd ever seen him in, and bought a pack horse, and we began tramping toward a mining camp at Gringo Pass. He told me I was to call him father, and also that I was going to begin to earn my salt. I was willing to earn my living, as I told him, but—I wouldn't call him father. That," she ended bitterly, "was the cause of the argument you interrupted—to your cost."

From beneath his sheltering hand, the artist's eyes studied the girl's face. That her story was true, he had no doubt. Her miraculous ignorance of evil had been as well guarded by the man Stout's selfish fears, as if he had been the most careful parent—a relationship more than doubtful.

Unconscious of his scrutiny, Frances returned to her darnning, and, growing absorbed in that prosaic, but healthful, recreation, the joy of life once more blossomed softly in her face. For the first time her companion examined her critically. The crop of dark, boyish curls covered a well-shaped head; the steel-gray eyes, large-irised and thickly fringed, were prone to anticipate the speech of a sensitive, mobile mouth, not too small for expression. Not at all

a pretty face, the painter decided emphatically; while her figure had the angular grace of a growing boy.

"I think we may dismiss any idea of relationship between you and this man, though possibly he knows something of your parentage, and hoped to make profit from the knowledge. You are, therefore, alone; and since you dislike the idea of returning to the convent so much——"

"I won't go back!"

"I doubt if they would take you now," he returned coldly. "And the conditions created through my unlucky illness would make it unfair for me to urge it. The impression has been created that—that—we are—man and wife." He looked away elaborately, frowning and discomfited, but held steadily on. "That is an impression which could be effaced only by explanations that would da—that is—sound too much like fiction. A man might live down such a story, but it would always dog a woman—to her hurt. I see only one remedy. You have no ties; I have—none—now. The only thing to do, then, is to ride over to the nearest parson, and have the—er—seeming knot made real."

Frances had stared at him in perplexity, and, when he finished, she drew a big breath.

"There must be a lot of sense in all that talk, but I wish you'd make the meaning a bit plainer. What should one do but tell the doctor and Joe Rud-dock the truth—how it all happened? And what is the 'knot' you're talking about? And why a parson? What is a parson, anyway?"

Her inability to help him out drove Dick to blunt, categorical response.

"No one would really believe the story of how you came to be in my house, to begin with. Then, the fact that you thought it a joke to corroborate my crazy claiming of you as my wife would hurt you in people's minds

and place us both in a false position. And parson is another name for priest," he explained. "In short, I'm telling you that the only thing for us to do is to become really man and wife."

"Oh-o!" Frances whistled like a boy. "But I thought people had to be awfully fond of each other to get married. Of course"—she shrugged carelessly—"I never saw but one girl who was going to be married. It was a Spanish Mexican at the convent. She thought she had a vocation till she met Señor Morales—I heard Sister Augustine telling Sister Agatha—and then she fell in love, and didn't want to be a religious any more. And Sister Augustine was awfully mad——"

"That's quite a different thing," interrupted Dick harshly, his face white. "Our marriage will merely be a convenience. It gives you a right to my name and protection, just as if you were my sister, you know," he added, with an attempt at a kindlier tone. "Also, it secures me a housekeeper."

Frances thoughtfully poked the head of a mountain-lion skin with the toe of her shabby moccasin, then raised her eyes to the stern face of her business-like suitor.

"I don't know as I'd better. I'd have to stay where you happened to be, I suppose?"

"It's customary."

"May I ask you a question or two? About yourself, I mean?"

He winced, as her quick eye noted, but replied briefly:

"Certainly."

"Well, then—are you as bad-tempered all the time as I've seen you? And, if so, am I to expect unpleasant times when you're put out?"

This naïve query caught him un-awares and tickled the sleeping humor of the old Dick Thurston. A genuine smile struggled to his lips.

"I think I'm usually considered quite

an easy-going fellow. But, at all events, I hope I'm always likely to act as a gentleman should, so I believe you need have no fear of the unpleasant times you mention."

She nodded, then braced herself for the most important word of all:

"Do—do you often get the—the way you were—you know—the first time I saw you? I—I don't want to be nasty, but, truly, I'd be afraid to risk that. It scares me stiff, and makes me—sick—to see a man—so!"

Her fingers laced and unlaced themselves nervously as she drove through the unpleasant question, and her sensitive face reflected the shamed red of his.

"You need fear no repetition of that. I—shall not explain; the cause has to do only with myself. But something happened that day—I—made a beast of of myself, trying to forget—that I was human."

With fine instinct she brushed aside the embarrassment, and, shaking back a rebellious curl, dropped into her usual easy, boyish tone:

"Well, I think I'd rather marry you than go back to the convent, and if you'll do just one little thing to please me, I'll do it."

She was deeply engrossed with her darning again, as she continued: "I want you to promise not to call me Frances any more." She hid a twinkle under long lashes. "I always hated the name, and, oh, how I wish they had christened me Patricia, after St. Patrick, you know! I'd love that, and I might be called Pat, for short. Could you, would you, call me Pat? It's a very handy name." She flashed him a beseeching look, which took full cognizance of Dick's expression of relief.

He caught eagerly at the suggestion, nor guessed her motive.

"Pat you shall be," he replied; and so that was settled.

CHAPTER VI.

As the slow days of convalescence crept by, the man's returning strength brought marked improvement in his spirits. A healthy contempt for women in general and Frances Blair in particular grew up, a thorny bush before the doorway of his heart. Dick thought the passage barricaded for all time.

When the studio door was once more left flung wide, Pat found that the wonderful golden portrait had disappeared. Toward his putative wife, the artist showed the same comradely courtesy a well-bred man exhibits toward his sister, save that there were no brotherly familiarities. It was the easiest attitude to take, and it was rendered natural by the girl's own bearing. Fitting readily into her environment, she cast away all fear for the future, and was as chummy and full of frank fun and life as a merry boy. While innocent of all feminine wiles, she yet took delightfully to the management of household affairs, and but that Dick refused his agreement, would have dispensed with the services of the placid Chinaman.

His most jealous scrutiny failing to catch any other symptoms of pernicious femininity, the artist gradually lost his resentment at the invasion of this new element into his life, and tolerant, half-amused liking took its place. Certainly the tedium of his convalescence was lightened to a degree by the merry presence.

Having made up his mind as to the only course to pursue, the artist was disgusted with the slowness of his progress toward the strength that was necessary before he could venture on the twenty-mile ride to the friendly priest he meant to take into his confidence. His satisfaction, therefore, was in proportion when one bright morning he recognized the fat white mule of Father O'Brien approaching, bearing the latter's round figure on its back.

Making what haste was possible, he succeeded in meeting the visitor some distance from the house, and was greeted by a hearty:

"And there you are, me son! I heard you'd been ill, so I rode over to see if I mightn't get in a bit o' proselyting while you was offguard belike."

Shaking with chuckling appreciation of his pet joke, the newcomer slipped to the ground with surprising agility, and a hearty handclasp between the two proved that a difference in religion did not lessen the real friendship existing between them.

"You're the one man I've been wanting to see above all others," declared Dick. "Let's talk a bit before we go up to the house."

Half an hour later, Pat came dancing onto the deep veranda, her lips puckered in a merry whistle, all unaware of the stranger's presence. At sight of the black-robed figure, all the radiant joy of life flashed out, leaving her face white; her eyes, accusing, contemptuous, blazed at the artist.

"You—you lied to me!" Her voice rang low, half suffocated with the bitterness welling within. "After your promise!"

The despairing anger of her tone stirred Dick to hasty denial.

"Nonsense, Pat! Father O'Brien just happened to come over, and I've been explaining the situation to him. Instead of our going to him, he's coming back to-morrow with the necessary witnesses, and fix things up properly."

Light and color flooded back to Pat's face, and, tossing back a troublesome lock of hair, she turned an apologetic, shamefaced glance from one to the other.

"I beg your pardon. I—I thought you'd been mean enough to cook up a plan to send me back to the convent."

Presently, at a sign from the priest, Dick sauntered away, and, during the next half hour Pat quite unconsciously

laid bare her inmost thoughts to the wise old eyes bent on her. Skilled in reading human hearts, the priest's kindly face was very tender when at last he laid his hand in blessing on the girl's head. A faint twinkle stole under his wrinkled lids as he recalled Dick Thurston's Spartan plans as the young man had placed them before him. Knowing the painter well, he entertained no fears for Pat's future.

After a meal and a couple of hours' rest, the priest cheerfully mounted his worthy quadruped and ambled down the trail, promising to return within forty-eight hours.

Meantime, her marriage day so near, Pat's mind reverted to certain matters that had disturbed her from time to time, and her uncompromising honesty at last drove her into speech.

They were sitting on the veranda, Dick lying back in a lounging chair, smoking; the girl on the doorstep, elbows on knees, her face held in her cupped hands, while her eyes looked away into space.

"Dick?"

"Yes?"

"It's no use! I can't go any farther till I ask one more question, and I know you'll hate it. But I must—and there's only you to ask."

Her troubled eyes and the unconscious pathos of her last words touched him. Poor little thing! It was at best a wild leap into the dark she was taking. He smiled kindly down at her.

"You've a perfect right to voice anything that's troubling you. And just here I want to say, you must never be afraid of me, Pat. Never doubt I mean to be your friend. Now, what's troubling you?"

"You—when you were ill, you know—you kept crying out over and over, 'She's my wife! No one can take her from me!' And—then, the ring—It meant something. And—and you didn't know my name, so it couldn't

have been just a sick fancy—and—I don't know—"

Dick was quite surprised at the easy nonchalance with which he caught up her halting words and answered:

"I should have thought of that. It's your right to know that there was a—girl back East, I expected to—marry. That day I'd gone to make certain arrangements for going back—for her. Instead, I got her letter, telling me she was on the eve of marrying a man three times her age—for his money. The ring—I'd had made for her."

Pat sat very erect.

"I would like," she declared, in clear, indignant tones, "to give that woman my whole opinion of her!"

CHAPTER VII.

So they were married; and some time later Father O'Brien wrote Dick of a visit he had paid to the convent near Monterey, and fully corroborated Pat's story. "I fancy," wrote the priest, "the child was at once the plague and joy of the good sisters' lives. The reverend mother had plenty to tell of her warm heart, her scorn of a lie, and also her genius for stirring up a commotion. I take it they're missing her sadly yet."

By that time the two had become the best of friends, and the artist enjoyed Pat's company as he might have that of a merry, clever boy. The past never came up between them save once when Joe Ruddock, a frequent visitor, inquired:

"However came you to twist the missus' name o' Frances into Pat, Dick?"

Dick turned to pick up a tube of color, at the same time sending out a cloud of dense smoke from his pipe, and Pat, who was struggling with the rudiments of art and using the obliging visitor as model, deftly took the answer on herself.

"We each of us perfectly despise a person named Frances, so I got him to compromise on Pat," she said placidly. "See here, Dick, his chin won't come right! I think he talks too much," she added, with a severe glance at the delighted Joe.

The situation was saved, but a few hours later Dick's curiosity prompted him to ask:

"Who is it named Frances you despise so?"

"St. Francis," responded Pat promptly. "The picture of him at the convent looked unhealthy, and squinted." Then she grinned like a malicious grig behind his back.

The weeks ran away into months, and Pat had lived more than a year in the homy little bungalow clinging to the hillside. Perfectly happy in her free, untrammelled life, she had outgrown the pinched, all too slender appearance of former days, and Dick frequently surveyed her with quite brotherly pride. He had long since ceased to regret the price paid to R. Stout "for value received."

Finding Pat's mind virgin soil, since the curriculum at the convent had scarcely stirred its surface, he sent for books to add to his own pet store, and found new and surprising pleasure in going over old ground with this promising pupil. While her attempts at his own profession were subjects only for riotous laughter, the artist was soon convinced that the girl's slender throat held an instrument worth treasuring. Her repertoire was a quaint mingling of old chorals, hymns, and fragments of grand old masses; but she utilized them in various original ways and with many new combinations. As full of mischief as a boy just out of school, nevertheless, at times when little Pat flung out her untrained voice in some beautiful old air she had sung with the peaceful nuns in the old stone mission, all the elfish gayety vanished; and Dick,

watching, thought she looked more spirit than human. With the promptitude that was one of his chief characteristics, he set about making plans for the proper training of her wonderful gift.

"It will be good for me to get out of my rut for a while. We'll close up here in the spring—say, in April—and I'll arrange to open the exhibit I've been planning in Chicago in May. That'll leave us free to start for Europe by the end of June. We'll take a three months' saunter around, just to show you some of the best bits, then settle down in Germany for the autumn and winter, where you can feed on music."

"But can you afford it, Dick?" Pat's gray eyes were black with a fearful joy of anticipation.

"Afford my grandmother! My dad left me four thousand a year securely invested; and, as I know enough about finance to realize that it's a dead language to me, I've left it alone—the principal, that is—so. I always have enough outside what I may sell. We'll have cash to burn, because I know all the ropes, and how to use them."

"How old are you, Dick?"

"Twenty-eight. Why?"

"Nothing. I was only curious. You vary from eighteen to eighty."

"Impertinence! You'll never get beyond fifteen."

They were swinging swiftly over a wide, frozen trail toward Silver Horn, muffled in furs, and feeling the tingle of the wild air as wine. The horses, too, seemed to breast the wind currents with the same exhilaration.

When the sleigh drew up before the post office, Dick handed the reins to Pat and sprang out. Directly opposite was a shabby, weather-worn building, the best hotel the mushroom town could boast. While Dick was inquiring for his mail, Pat's eyes roved negligently over the ugly façade.

"Asleep, Pat?" Dick stepped in be-

hind the fur robe, tucking his handful of letters and papers between them for safety.

"No, only half frozen," she returned, handing back the reins.

"Cold? Shall I get you something warm to drink?" motioning toward the hotel.

"No, no. I'm not really cold. Let's get our errands done, and go. It's warmer on the trail than in this ugly place."

"All right!" While Dick cautiously turned the lively team, Pat's hands were busy with her hat and high fur collar. Her eyes were glancing sideways.

She was unusually quiet all the way home. Thinking her overtired, Dick urged the willing horses, and, when they reached the bungalow, picked her up, robes and all, and deposited her in a big chair before the log fire.

When he came stamping in from attending to the horses, to his surprise she was still crouched where he had left her, her usually bright face overlaid with a white, strained look of fear. She gave him no time for questions.

"Dick, can't we go away now? Need we wait—for spring?"

He stared, bewildered.

"Why, what's up? I thought you were halting between two opinions about wanting to go at all!"

"I am! I was! Oh, Dick, I'm afraid! I thought nothing would ever frighten me again! But his face—it looked so wicked—so evil!"

Pat lifted wide, terrified eyes to her companion's face, all their gay mischief quenched.

Dick stooped, and, picking her up, first removed her coat and cap, then seated her once more, pulled a chair close, and, sitting down himself, took both shaking little hands in a firm clasp.

"Look at me!" he commanded crisply; "and answer just what I ask you. First, who is *he*?"

"R. Stout."

Dick started, his eyes darkening.

"Where did you see him?"

"At a window in the hotel across from the post office. He—he was staring at me when I happened to glance that way. I—I made no sign of knowing him, and I think he was uncertain till you came out. Then—I pretended to fix my hat, and watched—and, oh, Dick, he knew you—at once. And he looked—devilish!" Pat was trying hard to control her shaken nerves, not to give way to the tears she despised; but he could see that she was thoroughly unstrung.

A hearty laugh made her blink uncertainly; it was followed by a little, gentle shake.

"And what if he did recognize us? And what if he did look unpleasant at thought of the drubbing I gave him? What can he do? What is there to scare you into a missish twitter like this, I'd like to know?" he scoffed.

Pat sat up with a jerk.

"I'm not missish, Dick Thurston!" she sputtered. "Don't you dare say it!" Then, catching his eye, she began to laugh at herself.

Seeing possible hysterics driven into the background, Dick gave prompt voice to his real interest in her news.

"I wish you'd told me at the time. If I'd only got a good look at the gentleman! Do you—are you game to drive in with me again to-morrow, Pat?" he asked eagerly.

"What good would it do?" she countered nervously. "I'm game, of course! But what's the use?"

"He has me at a disadvantage, as it is," rejoined Dick craftily. "You know he sees me every time we meet, while to all intents I don't see him."

This struck her forcibly—as he had expected.

"I'll go. But, Dick, you'll be awfully careful, won't you? And—and smash him first?"

Dick roared with delight.

"I will that. Trust me, if he hasn't already run away. I'll smash him good this time, on very slight provocation."

Pat was quiet to an unheard-of degree all the evening. She sat in her favorite position like a small Turk, on the big bearskin before the blaze, and strummed lightly on an old banjo of Dick's.

"What's weighing on you, Patsy?" asked her companion, after watching her shadowed expression for a time.

She turned a wistful, disquieted glance on him.

"I'm thinking of all that money R. Stout cheated you out of, and all I've cost you since, and—and I don't see how I'm ever going to repay you——"

Dick Thurston leaned forward.

"Pat, look me straight in the face. So. Now, tell me, don't you think I'm a pretty truthful fellow? Would you be willing to take my word for most things?"

"Of course."

"Well, then, just remember this, and don't you ever let anything make you doubt it for one moment. If R. Stout had it in his power to ask twice the sum I gave him for—'value received'—I'd pay it in a minute, and consider I'd cheated him outrageously. As for what I've spent since you came here, you've more than earned it just by being yourself—the best little chum a man ever had. I consider myself a mighty lucky fellow, and—I hoped you, too, were content."

Pat's eyes glowed like stars. She bent forward to slip her slender little hand into his, outstretched to meet it.

"Content! I never supposed a person could be as happy as I am. You're awfully good to me, Dick, and if you really mean that, it takes away the only trouble I had. But if you don't care for the money, why bother with R. Stout any more?"

"I want to see him dance good and

lively for all he made a child suffer, the brute!"

But the next day Tantrum was just a bit out of condition, and his master reluctantly postponed the merry meeting he had planned. Though had he but known it, R. Stout, cautiously scouting, was within reach for an hour or more between the two days.

When, a few days later, the couple went flying back over the snow to Silver Horn, the gentleman they sought had taken a train East. But the description given by Pat and repeated to the hotel keeper by Dick fitted a person who had registered under the title of J. Keene.

"Friend of yours, I take it, Mr. Thurston, seein' that you're askin' for him. And he inquired how to find you, though he came back late and said he had missed you, after all."

"Not a friend," stated Dick pleasantly; "merely a man I once did some business with."

He didn't tell Pat that her undesirable acquaintance had trailed them home. Whatever the man's reason, nothing had come of it, so why disturb her mind?

CHAPTER VIII.

The following days sped swiftly, filled with preparations of various kinds for the year beyond the sea. If at times the memory that he had hoped to spend his honeymoon with lovely Frances Blair amid the very scenes to which Pat was looking forward with such radiant anticipations brought to Dick a sting of angry pain; if at times the "yellow witch," in all her haunting charm of face and form, rose and fanned the grayed embers of his passionate desire into evanescent glow, the voice of his true-hearted little comrade came ever as a relief, and scorn that he should have wasted love on so poor a thing proved wholesome caution.

In March, big Joe Ruddock took to himself a wife; a wholesome, handsome girl of the West, with whom he had been hopelessly in love long before his courage had risen to the asking point.

After a honeymoon in Denver, the happy couple stopped at Thurston's for a couple of days on their way home, which lay in the next valley. This visit offered new and surprising glimpses of human nature to Pat, who, on the departure of the married lovers, poured a mass of observations and deductions into Dick's amused ears.

Huddled on her favorite bearskin, she gave free play to her powers of mimicry, and presented a series of moving pictures of big Joe's abashed delight and devotion, as well as of Abby's coquettish reception of the same.

"Dick," she interrupted herself suddenly, "I never thought either of them was silly before. Abby seemed so—so sensible; and Joe never so much as touched her hand. He seemed so—so very respectful to her always."

"And now?" Dick was enjoying himself.

She made a little distasteful grimace.

"Twice I saw him grab her up like a regular bear. I was surprised, but Abby—didn't seem to notice any difference. And, Dick"—the big gray eyes were round with amaze and disgust—"yesterday I came in here suddenly, and, as true as I live, they were both squeezed into your big chair, and—and—"

"And—what?" choked Dick.

"Kissing each other as if they hadn't met in years!"

Then, even as her listener rocked and held his aching sides, the familiar imp shoved aside the dainty offense of her glance, and released the spring of laughter.

"You should have seen them *pop*, when they saw me!" she chuckled.

Her eyes went back to the flames, and Dick studied her.

"You mustn't be too hard on them," he said. "And, above all, don't think for a moment that Joe is lacking in respect for Abby. Their attitude, even sitting in one chair"—with a smile—"is perfectly proper, even excusable, under the circumstances. Remember they're young and married."

"Humph! What difference does that make? So are we young and married; but we don't act like sillies."

A queer light flickered in the man's eyes a moment, then he laughed teasingly.

"Then you don't think you'd like to sit here." He motioned to a narrow space unfilled in the wide chair he occupied.

She met his look clearly—a frank, boyish look—then laughed.

"Can you imagine either of us being so foolish? Why use one chair when there are plenty to go around?"

"But Joe and Abby are in love," he said, for the sake of hearing her rejoinder.

"So are we," she asserted calmly. "Of course, you hated to have me here at first, but you said one day—don't you remember?—that you'd got all over that. And, of course, I love you. You're the only person belonging to me in the world."

Something in her words and the serene trust of her eyes brought a sting and a blur to the man's eyes.

"You're right, Pat," he answered quietly. "And while we can bank on each other, let the rest of the world go hang."

But he didn't enlighten her as to the subtle difference between loving and "being in love."

The painter believed that R. Stout's interest in his late victims had shown its final flicker in that surreptitious visit he had made to their home; less than a month later, this theory was entirely subverted.

Silver Horn's one through train

from the East disturbed the echoes at the unholy hour of six-thirty a. m.; so when, on a clear morning in early April, it deposited two passengers at the crude station, it was small wonder that one of them, a young, elegantly dressed woman, looked about in shivering disgust, and urged on her companion the first claims of a hotel and breakfast. The portly, well-preserved gentleman of sixty-odd saw to his wife's comfort, and, while waiting for their meal to be prepared, entered into conversation with the barkeeper as to the whereabouts of a man named Richard Thurston.

"Dick Thurston?"

The barkeeper explained in terse words the location of the artist's place, and promised to have a conveyance in readiness to carry the guests thither at nine o'clock.

The stranger's handsome, ruddy face was somewhat agitated; his lips parted on another question, which he did not ask, however. Instead, he said simply: "At nine, then. And it will take a couple of hours, you say?"

"Just about, with a good team; and that I'll guarantee."

Dick Thurston and Pat, unconscious of the approach of destiny behind a pair of half-broken mustangs, had chosen that day to overhaul a stack of canvases that must be disposed of against their swiftly coming departure. The pick of his work had already been forwarded to a consignee in the big Middle Western city where he had arranged for his exhibit.

The girl was zealously clearing a closet of all manner of discards, while Dick, equally hard at work, sorted, saving such as appealed to his critical sense—or to Pat's fancy—condemning others.

"This is the last," gasped Pat, staggering out with an armful of dusty stretchers, one much larger than the rest.

"You mustn't handle such heavy loads," scolded Dick, springing to take them from her. Letting the smaller ones slip to the floor, he leaned the larger canvas against a table, face out. Then he started back, coloring and biting his lip; while Pat, after one curious, comprehending stare, turned away and left the room, saying something about getting rid of the dust on her hands and dress.

It was the portrait of the "yellow witch"—but blotting out the lovely face was a broad sweep of black paint.

While the painter and the ghost were facing each other, there came without a sudden trampling of hoofs, the raucous voice of a man halting his team; a moment later, a rat-tat upon the door made Dick pull himself vigorously together. He set the canvas face to the wall, dusted himself hastily, and went to open.

"Mr. Richard Thurston?"

Dick bowed assentingly, his attention caught by the strained excitement, struggling through the habitual reserve of a man of the world, of the dignified gentleman before him.

"Mr. Thurston, I—am come on an errand of vital importance—to me—and—to others. May I—"

"Come in! Come in!" interrupted Dick cordially. "Take the team around, Dan," he called to the driver; and, standing aside, he ushered his guests within.

"Pardon the mess you find things in, but I'm packing up for an indefinite holiday."

He set a chair for the veiled woman, but the man waved his aside. Fumbling with shaking hands in a letter case he had drawn from his pocket, he said:

"My name, Mr. Thurston, is Williston—Reed Williston."

In spite of a will to avoid it, Dick started ever so slightly, yet turned no

glance upon the silent, elegant figure of the woman, although he became subtly conscious of her fixed gaze on him.

"I have come here," went on Mr. Williston, still struggling with some strong inner feeling, "in answer to a letter I received a week ago—a letter I must ask you to read, since it will explain my errand more—more easily than—I find—I can do."

He thrust a thick envelope into the younger man's hands, gasping brokenly:

"Read! Read it quickly! And, for God's sake, put me out of torment—if you can."

Silently Dick Thurston opened the folded sheets, and read:

DENVER, March 31, 1902.

Mr. Reed Williston.

VERY DEAR AND RESPECTED SIR: It has been many a year since you have had the pleasure of hearing from me. At that last writing, you may recall that I promised I would some day try to show you in what manner I cherished the memory of certain acts of yours and your dear son's, which resulted in my compulsorily withdrawing from the world for a stated period. At long last, I am in a position to keep my promise, and to return some of the many favors you and yours heaped upon me.

Permit me to remind you that when your precious son and his charming wife met their deaths by the foundering of a west-coast steamer, it was stated that their infant child was also drowned. But such accounts are always more or less inaccurate, so you will not be so greatly surprised, perhaps, to learn that at this present writing your granddaughter is very much alive, and in robust health.

By one of those freaks of fate or fortune which make fiction seem tame at times, the child was rescued by a friend of mine, who had his own reasons for modesty in appearing in the rôle of a hero. His reluctance to entering the limelight was in fact so great that he permitted an equally exaggerated assertion regarding his own death to pass uncontradicted.

Some years after, I chanced to meet him. In fact, he became a boarder in that excellent public hostelry to which you and your son had caused me to be consigned.

Great was my joy to learn that he had placed the grandchild of my dearest enemy in a convent near Monterey.

Needless to state, I was no sooner at liberty than I hastened to the convent, where, with the aid of some cleverly prepared papers (you'll admit I was always facile with a pen) and a tale of a villainous brother's machinations, I claimed *my daughter* (!), a spoiled little baggage, who had to be severely disciplined at times by her faithful parent.

Well, I had planned to get a tidy sum out of you, and followed you here and there for the best part of two years. You were infernally restless, and since my ticket of leave was not quite regularly issued, I was obliged to be careful. After continually missing connections with you, I was beginning to scour the whole proposition, when I learned you were expected in Denver at a bankers' convention on a certain date a year or more ago. I set out at once; but when halfway there, read in a newspaper that you had cut the convention in favor of a second honeymoon around the world with a young and lovely bride.

I'm afraid, dear friend, my young daughter's discipline was extremely severe about that time. I was disheartened and out of pocket; so determined to make one member of your carrion crew repay in part what you owed me, and started for a mining camp—a crowded, lawless place—where I purposed opening an amusement hall with gambling on the side, and Miss Williston as a star attraction. Later, however, I changed my mind, and sold her outright to a drunken artist I met with on the trail. His name is Thurston—Richard Thurston—living near Silver Horn, Colorado, and if you care to learn any further particulars of the young lady's career, he can doubtless supply them.

Waiving all thanks in advance, I subscribe myself, yours contentedly, WALTER HART.

P. S.—Daughter knew me as R. Stout.

As the banker's haggard eyes watched the swiftly changing expressions of Dick Thurston's fine face, a gleam of hope dawned in them; and when, at the last word, the young man let the venomous sheets fall to the floor, the old man moved a step nearer, looking the question his lips refused to speak.

Still white with the clean anger burning in him, Dick's words were few and quietly spoken:

"Mr. Williston, your granddaughter is my wife."

A quick start rustled the draperies of the silent woman in the background, but her husband's tense breath broke in a half sob, just as the door opened, and, unconscious of the strangers' presence, Pat, gay and debonair, with the clear, direct glance of an innocent child, stood, wondering, on the threshold.

Dick held out his hand.

"We have visitors, Pat, very surprising visitors," he said, smiling; then, as she came forward: "This is Mrs. Thurston, Mr. Williston."

Eagerly, breathlessly, the banker studied the dark-gray eyes, the frank, mobile face, charming while boasting no perfection of feature.

"I should know you anywhere for your mother's child," he said huskily. "It is my son's little wife come to life again—the baby Edith who loved nothing better than riding to Boston on her granddaddy's knee."

"Dick!" With a fine thrill of satisfaction, Dick Thurston, watching in unconscious jealousy, saw his little chum turn to him—heard her appeal to him in this great, strange hour of her life. And something primevally combative rose within him and shook itself. Nothing could or should come between him and—his.

"Steady, Pat. There's great news for you to hear, so you want to keep your head," he said gayly. "Listen, dear."

Briefly he sketched in the story he had plucked from the poisonous verbiage in which Walter Hart, alias R. Stout, had wrapped it.

Even as he finished, and while Pat's grandfather held her hands close, and murmured incoherent thanks and blessings for this unexpected outcome, the stately woman's figure waiting stirred, flung back the shrouding veil, and came forward with slow grace.

"I trust I'm not quite forgotten, Dick—Mr. Thurston?"

She stood looking at him with all the old sorcery of faintly smiling eyes and lips; the old music rang in her languid tones; for a second he grew dizzy with a reflex of the old sweet madness. Then the woman watching was puzzled at the strange expression that dawned in his eyes; a queerly introspective look of surprise—doubt—belief—relief. She could not know—her perceptions were not fine—that to his amazement this man, glancing shrinkingly within the olden shrine, had found it empty of its olden idol. He met her hand halfway, rejoining cordially:

"Indeed, no, Mrs. Williston. Old friends are not lightly forgotten; even though absence will somewhat dim their memories."

Then, being astute in the humors of rejected suitors, Frances Williston knew that the old shackles were broken beyond rewelding.

She moved to her husband's side; her cool, sweet voice broke in upon his still-agitated sentences. Pat, for once, was quite tongue-tied.

"If I could have dreamed who was the original of that wretched writer's 'drunken artist,' I might have saved you something of worry, Reed. But I certainly never recognized my old friend, Richard Thurston, in the unflattering picture," she cooed gently; and Reed Williston started into remembrance of her presence. Turning a radiant face from one to the other, he cried hastily:

"Ah, Frances, my dear, pardon my neglect. My child"—turning to Pat—"this is my dear wife, who is only less thankful than myself, I know, at this unlooked-for outcome."

Then and there Dick Thurston received firsthand proof that education is but an acquired husk beneath which the natural human type more or less

successfully hides. In all her eighteen years, Pat had had no experience to warrant her instant knowledge of existing undercurrents, or her instinctive grasping of a purely feminine weapon.

All in a glance, she had recognized the fair-haired Delilah, and now seized her chance to score one against the girl who had treated Dick so shabbily. Only he recognized the imp that danced in her eyes as she put out both hands, crying impulsively:

"Oh, what a pretty grandmother! Dick, isn't she lovely?"

Reaching on tiptoe, she pressed a Judas kiss on the perfect lips of her surprised and disgusted new relative, while the banker beamed in placid innocence, and Dick choked with the laughter he might not betray.

Presently it was settled that the Willistons should remain a few days at least, and Dan was dispatched to bring over their luggage.

Pat's new grandfather followed her incessantly with his eyes, not yet sure that the awful nightmare in which he had ridden across the continent was but a nightmare, and, as such, to be relegated into the limbo of things forgot. He wanted to take his recovered treasure back to his home, and, when Frances saw that the idea did not appeal to Pat's husband, since it would be impossible for him to go farther than Chicago, she joined her soft pleadings to those of the banker. When, later, Dick was out of the way, she urged skillfully the girl to consider her grandfather in the matter, and not let a selfish wish of her own stand in the way of the visit the old man had set his heart on.

"But Dick will take me there before we go abroad; he says so."

"It won't be quite the same. Your grandfather naturally wants you all to himself for a time."

Pat's gray eyes studied the lovely face before her, and, while the golden-

brown eyes smiled, and the perfect lips uttered gracious words, the girl felt that their spirits were at variance. Suddenly an idea came dancing into her brain like a mischievous sunbeam. She looked guilelessly into the other's eyes, and promised:

"I'll do just as Dick says about it. If he thinks I ought to go, I will."

Now Dick had purposely remained rather neutral, since he could not persuade himself it would be generous to urge Pat to refuse what she might secretly hanker after.

Excusing herself on some small pretext, after Frances had received the promise with the triumphant belief that it meant the gaining of her end, Pat slipped away, and, capturing Dick on his way to the house, led him into the seclusion of an empty stall next Tantrum's.

There, nervous of look and voice, she turned on him breathlessly.

"Dick, you're not going to let my grandfather take me away, are you? You won't let that catty Frances woman have her way in the matter, will you?"

Again Dick felt a thrill of elation that this dear little comrade counted him first. She didn't want to go away without him, after all.

"Not by a jugful!" he declared stoutly. "What kind of a disorganized world would this be if a mere grandfather could step in and snatch away a man's wife from him in that fashion?"

Pat drew a deep breath of relief.

"That's so!" She nodded joyously. "I remember now, Father O'Brien said something like that. What was it? What God hath joined—man dare not sunder—wasn't it?"

"Words to that effect," laughed Dick; then, with a sudden transition of feeling, he added gently: "And none but God guided us to each other, Pat."

They stood quietly a little space,

then Pat lifted shy eyes up to her companion.

"I—I couldn't help knowing—who she is, Dick."

"And why not, my dear?" he returned quietly. "Your grandfather's wife is—your grandfather's wife; no more, no less."

CHAPTER IX.

It was after the evening meal, and they were gathered on the deep veranda. The two men smoked and lounged in low chairs, while Pat sat on the step between them. A few feet away—far enough for a proper perspective—Mrs. Williston made an exquisite picture, at which Pat gazed in open admiration. The evening air still held a tang, and she had thrown about her a fluffy wrap of silvery-blue chiffon and white fur. The low sun made an aura of her hair. From the perfect face, Pat's gaze passed to the portly, dignified form of her grandfather; thence on to Dick—tall, slender—young. Quite suddenly and most irrationally, a feeling of pity swept over her for that other woman—pity that its unconscious recipient would have neither comprehended nor appreciated.

"Grandmamma," she exclaimed warmly, "I wonder if you've any idea how perfectly lovely you look! Does she, Dick?"

With a little smile, Frances turned her golden-brown eyes upon the man who had, only two short years before, met them with the look of a fire worshiper for the sun. He met her glance coolly, appraisingly—not at all fazed by the sudden appeal; then he rested his own with a glimmer of amusement on Pat's upturned face.

"Between you and me, Pat," he answered gayly, "I believe our lovely grandmamma knows quite well just how very lovely she is. You see, she's probably had a mirror all her days."

"Well, I suppose so, but"—a bubble of laughter broke from her—"if I had half her looks, I'd be strutting around like Sister Agatha's peacock in the sun."

Her grandfather, who had listened in quiet appreciation, spoke up, laying his hand a moment on the girl's head:

"There are many different kinds and degrees of beauty, my child. Your mother was one of the most attractive girls I ever saw; and you are her living image."

Pat turned with a quick, birdlike motion, and kissed his hand.

Something in the little scene displeased the lovely "grandmamma," unused as she was to being out of the direct rays of the limelight.

"But pray tell us, Mr. Thurston, what happy chance brought you to the rescue? Where did you meet with this little foundling? Surely"—something in her tone tingled along Pat's nerves—"there was no truth in that wretched man's statement that you—bought your wife—like a horse, or a sack of potatoes!"

A stinging shame suddenly surged through Pat's being. For the first time that transaction, which to her had meant only a joyful release from awful bondage, took on a different aspect. But before she could make any betraying sign, Dick's cool voice stilled her mental tumult, while his hand lay lightly on her shoulder.

"Well, hardly! That wouldn't be either Pat's style or mine," he rejoined, with a light laugh. "I was fortunate enough to meet her just after her escape from the brute who posed as her father, and took her to some friends of mine for safe-keeping. And that," gayly, "was the beginning of our romance. Patsy, it's too chilly for you here without a wrap. Where shall I find you something?"

"I'll go myself. Things are so at

sixes and sevens, I wouldn't know where to tell you to look."

Having thus given her a chance to make her escape, the artist addressed himself earnestly to Mr. Williston.

"I wish as far as possible, sir, to prevent your granddaughter's mind being turned back to that experience with the man Stout, or Hart. She has a morbid fear of him, and I have striven to make her forget all about it. Ask me what you will, but spare her all catechizing, I beg."

"Quite right! Quite right!" assented the banker. "I'm sure Mrs. Williston will agree with us as to your wisdom. Poor child! Thank Heaven her parents were spared the awful hours I lived through after receiving that scoundrel's lying letter!"

When the Willistons had retired for the night, Dick sat staring out over the quiet valley, mysterious in the moonlight, thinking many thoughts. Suddenly, in the darkness behind him, a soft voice whispered:

"Dick?"

He started up. "What's wrong, Pat?"

"Nothing. That is, may I talk to you a little while?"

Noiselessly he lifted and placed a chair close beside his own; then, fetching his overcoat, he wrapped it about her and tucked her in.

"Now you may," he answered, imitating her cautiously lowered voice. But she seemed to find difficulties for once in voicing her thoughts. "Speak up, childie. You promised to trust me every time. What's worrying you?"

She leaned a little forward, and, in the mellow moonlight, Dick saw the color flood her delicate face, while the gray eyes gleamed like deep pools.

"Dick"—the words rushed out—"she made me feel—ashamed!"

He did not pretend to misunderstand.

"Pat, that's just what she was try-

ing to do; but I thought you were too fair-minded to let her make a score."

"Fair-minded?"

"Yes. A really fair-minded person is sane enough to judge himself just as he would an outsider. Have you ever in your life done a mean thing? Have you ever told a lie? Have you ever willfully hurt or injured any one?"

Pat stared at him; there was a flicker of quick temper in her answer:

"You know I wouldn't!"

"Yes, Patsy, I know you wouldn't, and you know you wouldn't. Then what in the world have you to be ashamed of?"

He watched her speaking face settle into its usual joyous serenity. Finally she drew a deep breath, and the mischievous dimples darted out about her lips.

"But, oh, Dick, what do you call your reply to our sweet grandmamma?"

"That," rejoined Dick airily, "was a thwarting of improper curiosity, and comes under the head of diplomacy."

Climbing a tortuous path at day-break, Mr. Williston followed a voice; a voice that had floated down to him from the heights, and carried him back to the dawn of early manhood—when he and Edith Fayre had kept tryst in a wood on a breezy New England hill. When he reached the last turning, he saw her sitting on a boulder against the daffodil light, this other Edith, with face slightly lifted, while all the joy and the rapture of life welled from her parted lips. Convent-bred, the words she sang were the words of one of earth's grandest old anthems; though I doubt whether Pat's emotions were other than those of a pure-hearted pagan at his orisons to the god of the new-born day.

"I will lift up mine eyes—mine eyes unto the hills," chanted the girl, "unto the hills, whence cometh my strength."

A rolling stone betrayed the listener, and she turned. Her grandfather came forward, dropping beside her on her rocky seat, while she smiled up at him with friendly gray eyes.

"You love it, too—the world wakening?" she questioned, but he ignored her words.

"Little daughter"—his voice was husky—"you have her voice—your grandmother's. You were named for her, you know. She, too, sang like the birds in springtime. Never have I heard just such a voice—since she died—until now."

Pat slipped caressing fingers into his.

"Tell me all about her, grandfather, while we're—up here." Alone, was what she meant, as perhaps he guessed. "And about my father and mother."

So, for an hour or more, in the brightening day, he told her a store of precious anecdotes; drew word pictures of that dear dead son, and his fragile, lovely wife, as well as of Pat's own babyhood. Then, going farther back, he lived once more for their little descendant the days of his early life with the dead grandmother, Edith. Pat warmed to her newly discovered relative more and more, and in turn confided to his eager ears all the simple story of her gray convent life.

Into the miserable months of her wanderings with the man she had known as R. Stout, he would not let her enter. But on their slow way down the hill he asked abruptly:

"Are you happy here, child? Is Thurston always kind and good to you?"

She stopped, lifting her clear eyes to his earnestly.

"Happy? Why, grandfather, I'd burst if I were any happier! And Dick is always just as you've seen him. I think"—she bobbed her head emphatically—"he's the best man in the world!"

He smiled, well pleased.

"Well, I dare say it won't come amiss for you to have your own bank account. Of course, I shall at once make over to you whatever your father left. It only amounts to a trifle over two thousand a year, but your granddaddy can add to that."

Pat turned quite pale.

"Do you mean that it will be mine? My own money? Two thousand dollars a year to spend as I like?"

"Who is the plutocrat crying out his riches in the listening ears of envious nature?" broke in a new voice, and Dick Thurston, rounding a corner, looked curiously from Mr. Williston's amused face to that of Pat, excited and incredulous. The girl put out both hands, and clung to his arm, as if holding to something familiar and stable in a dizzying new world.

"Dick," she breathed, in an awed voice, "he says—my grandfather says—that I shall have money of my own! Two thousand a year! Now—now I can pay——"

A fine white line had grown about Dick's nostrils; he caught the words from her.

"Yes, now you can repay those blessed nuns their care. Suppose we make it a joint affair—each chip in a thousand."

Puzzled at having her meaning side-tracked, and recognizing an unfamiliar something in his look, she was loyally swift to follow his lead.

"Oh, that would be fine! They are so poor, you know. Sometimes their habits are quite worn out before they can afford to renew them."

"You must let me in on that also," chimed in the banker, clearing his throat. That eager lilt in the clear, young voice was so like—so very like. "I'll add three more, and make it five."

Then for the first time, as the artist told himself, he saw Pat act like a real girl. Rising on tiptoe, she slipped her

arms about her grandfather's neck, and kissed him warmly. Then she turned to Dick, and his heart gave a queer flop; for a moment he thought—A slim hand gave his a vigorous squeeze, as Pat declared:

"You are both certainly the dearest dears!"

CHAPTER X.

Kipling's "Bimbi" had "too much ego in his cosmos"—and, for all the evolutionary æons between his start in life and that of the beautiful Mrs. Williston, the old German savant's terse summing up of the ape's nature applied equally well to that of the lady.

Since the days when her perfect baby face had attracted injudicious admiration, to the moment when, in her twentieth year, Richard Thurston had met and promptly lost his head at sight of her, there had never been a time when she had not been absorbedly in love with herself, and serenely intent on causing a like absorption in others.

It is true that for a space Dick's headlong passion had almost made her lose sight of self; and, finding real lovelight in her wonderful eyes even more becoming than the smiling counterfeits she had practiced at times, she had been led into making promises to the forceful young painter which her subconscious self had at once repudiated. But her perfect lips had given back his kisses, and she had sat to him for the golden portrait, that he might carry it West with him as a stimulus to the work which, already promising, was to place his name among the immortals.

"Pansies for thoughts," he had quoted, when he had chosen the rich purple blossoms for accent in the color scheme.

After a while he had gone away, and had written his heart out to her each week, and dreamed of climbing the

wonderful height where a radiant figure beckoned.

And Frances Blair, having coyly insisted on keeping their engagement "just between us two," had gone on in her old way; answering Dick's letters regularly, and smiling faintly over his frequent allusions to their future—together. But in due time a suitable setting for her rare beauty had been offered—and accepted. She loved the artist only a little less than herself, but it had sufficed—that little less—to prevent anything so banal as the sacrifice of her lovely, pampered body to the whim of her heart. Poor dear Dick! With his funny notion of living (sic!) two-thirds of the year in the Colorado mountains for the sake of his art! She had shivered daintily. No, Dick, with his art, and a few thousands a year, as a lover had been incomparable; but beside Reed Williston—millionaire, banker, and railway magnate, with a house on upper Fifth Avenue, another at Palm Beach, not to mention a yacht and a private car—he would prove deplorably inadequate as a husband.

So, with a becomingly pensive shade in her golden-brown eyes, she had written her renunciatory letter; then had stood up, looking like an expensive twentieth-century angel, and promised to love, honor, and obey the banker.

But it was one thing for Frances Blair to decide that her duty demanded the sacrifice of love's young dream on a cold hymeneal altar, and quite another that her late slave, the one person she had ever really loved in even her self-centered fashion, should exercise a like privilege. She was inwardly amazed at the fierce resentment that had scorched her at sound of Richard Thurston's first quiet words after the reading of Walter Hart's hateful letter:

"Your granddaughter is my wife."

Eagerly her eyes had turned upon the creature who had dared step into

her place. The mere fact that she had vacated it in no wise argued that it should not be kept sacred to her late presence. She had taken it for granted that Dick would deem memory and the golden portrait a worthy "second best." Quite too much ego had Frances in her cosmos!

Instead of sworn celibacy, however, the man had actually married with indecent haste. And not only married, but, shade of Momus! had taken to wife her husband's granddaughter, and relegated her, his late worshiped fiancée, to the position of—his grandmother!

"'Tis a mad world, my masters!"

Each time that mischievous "grand-mamma" fell from Pat's lips, the anger of the lady so addressed grew. All through the hours of that first day she felt herself to be violently out of perspective—enveloped in a distorting veil of humorous suggestion. Her attempt to urge Pat's acceptance of her grandfather's loving invitation arose from a sudden vicious desire to separate at any cost these two who had dared to set aside her one love episode as a paltry thing of no account.

Night brought reassurance. During the dark hours she recalled certain tokens of something unusual in the Thurston ménage that roused her curiosity. She also remembered that the marriage of these two had been almost coincident with her own; and, shallow and egotistical as her own nature was, she knew that Dick Thurston was not the man to be caught on such a swift rebound. Had he then married this waif from pique? Or, more likely, considering his fantastic chivalry—because she had been, in a manner, thrown on his hands?

If for either of these reasons, he certainly could not be in love with her, a merry, unformed hoyden. Not after — A glance into the mirror brought a faint smile to the perfect lips. But

loved or unloved, the girl was intolerable, and must be taught a wholesome lesson; must be quietly, but effectually, taught her place in the general scheme of things. It should be no difficult matter. Frances Blair had met with little determined rivalry in her career; principally because she was wont to waste no time on the other girl—looking past her into the man's eyes.

So when the two men, with Pat between them babbling like a joyous brook, entered the veranda, where breakfast waited, they found a vision standing in the doorway that made Pat catch her breath with delight, the banker's eyes gleam proudly, and Dick—Two pairs of feminine eyes sought his face, only to turn away—baffled.

During the two following days Frances Williston's beautiful eyes studied the situation about her. The perfect understanding existing between the two young people evidently left nothing to be desired, and yet—What was it, the elusive shadow that indicated something—different? Gradually it dawned on the watcher that Dick Thurston never treated his wife to any of those little commonplace familiarities which naturally obtain between people thus closely connected.

He laughed and chaffed; he was punctiliously observant of small courtesies; he deferred to her opinion. But there was a line he never seemed to cross. And Pat? That the girl was naturally affectionate and impulsive betrayed itself hourly in her childish demonstrations toward her newly found grandfather. She seemed to revel in the unwonted relationship, and when he drew her down to the arm of the huge chair in which he sat, her fingers strayed naturally to his iron-gray hair with caressing little touches.

"It's good to belong to some one!" she exclaimed on one such occasion, with a fervor that two of her listeners found pathetic.

But Mrs. Williston's eyes opened in pretty surprise.

"But where are you placing Mr. Thurston, my dear?" she asked.

Pat flashed a gay smile at Dick.

"Oh, he's different. He's not a real relation, like a grandfather; are you, Dick?"

"I should hope not! A woman may not marry her grandfather!" he returned, with an answering glance that perhaps he knew would bring Mrs. Williston's perfect teeth together with a vicious little click. It reminded her too well of other looks and other days.

"Reed"—Mrs. Williston's voice was wonderfully low and musical—"did you think of going on to the Pacific coast while we were West?"

"I ought to. There's a matter I have intended looking into personally."

"How long would it take?"

"Journey and all, possibly a week. Why?"

"I was thinking—if you don't mind going alone and it is agreeable to these young people—I might remain here, and you could pick me up on the return journey. I should like to get better acquainted with Edith, and perhaps"—sweetly—"I may yet persuade her to go East with us."

Pat was diving after an elusive kitten, so her face was hidden; but Dick's held the correct expression of hospitality, as he answered promptly:

"We shall be charmed, Mrs. Williston, to have you remain, but you mustn't count on softening my Bluebeard heart. I refuse to be left desolate. Remember, Patsy, your duty is to turn a deaf ear to the charmer, charm she ever so wisely."

Pat flashed him a grimace from behind the retrieved kitten, but responded with burlesque meekness:

"Please, sir, I'll remember."

Frances Williston was too well-bred ever to have used language such as is popularly ascribed to fishwives, but at

that moment her frame of mind was not dissimilar to theirs.

But the next morning, the banker having taken a train westward, his lady looked over her hand and settled down to her game. Two days later, she had a try-out with Dick; a game *à deux*, in which she endeavored to make hearts trumps.

"Dick!" They were alone on the veranda, and Frances leaned forward suddenly, throwing into her eyes an expression her mirror had pronounced appropriate. "Dick, will you never forgive me? Oh, Dick, I—I—have suffered!"

At her first word, a flush of angry scorn stung his face. Was she really so poor a thing as this? But that last quivering, "I—have suffered!" caused an almost hysterical revulsion, and he turned to her with a laugh.

"My dear Mrs. Williston," he said coolly, "you never suffered in your life—in the manner you mean."

Their eyes held each other a second; then, in a tone of careless indifference that closed the incident, he remarked:

"If this weather continues, we must show you a little of our country during the next few days. Do you ride horseback?"

"I tried it a while, but found it rather more strenuous exercise than I care for," she returned languidly. Then, as they caught sight of a trim khaki-clad figure cantering along the winding trail several hundred feet below, she added: "Edith sits her horse well. It's a pity Western girls ride after such a rowdy fashion."

"Rowdy?" politely inquiring, but with a glint in his eye that it pleased her to note.

"Astride."

"Oh! We call it sensible." He spoke pleasantly, as if explaining a little difference in colloquialisms; then he jumped up, with a smiling wave to Pat,

who was just mounting the last slope on Tantrum's back.

"Hold his head while I get off, Dick," called the girl. "He's as bad as he can be to-day, and nearly pulled my arms off."

Dick lifted her from the saddle and led the horse away, while Pat waved an envelope as she advanced toward her stepgrandmamma.

"I met Mr. Ruddock at the fork, and he was bringing this telegram for you."

Frances opened it, and ran her eye over the few words.

"From Mr. Williston. He met the man whom he was going to see, so he will be able to return to-morrow afternoon."

"Goody!" Pat clapped her hands like a child, just as Dick came around the corner on Tantrum's back.

When he had heard the news, "Then I'll borrow Joe's Peach while I'm over there," he said to Pat, who nodded.

His guest watched him ride away with an unpleasant gleam in her lovely eyes, then sat her down to a second game, which called for spades for trumps, and also permitted, in a lady-like way, some small use of clubs. Later, she rose, with quite a heavy score in her favor.

Dick Thurston watched his wife un-easily that evening, and occasionally, under cover of a desultory conversation, studied the fair face of their guest. He told himself that Pat looked as if some inner light of her spirit were burning low and dim. In spite of all her plucky attempts to dissemble, there would come a wistful droop at times to the pretty lips, so prone to laughter. Once, when their eyes met for a fleeting second, it seemed to him a question lay in hers.

"Can that woman have got in some damned cat work while I was away?" he pondered; and he waited with what patience he could for the hour to arrive when the lady so uncomplimenta-

rily designated must retire. Then he would have it out with Pat. But Pat herself was the first to give up. About nine she rose, with a well-simulated little yawn and gesture of fatigue.

"I'm outrageously sleepy. You'll both excuse me, I know, if I say good night now."

With an airy wave of her hand, she was gone before either of the others could speak. Receiving but scanty support, conversation languished and speedily died between the remaining two, until with slow grace Frances Williston rose, holding out her hand.

"I think you'll forgive me if I follow Edith's example?" There was a little questioning lift to her statement that he had once found charming, but that struck his ear now as artificial. "Your lovely mountain air rather inclines one to early hours."

His eyes followed the perfect figure, and he thought—things its owner would hardly have credited.

For nearly an hour he sat quietly smoking, forcing down his impatient desire until the light sounds from behind the guest-room door had ceased. Then he rose and went to the door of Pat's little sanctum, which his care had made as daintily fine as a girl's heart could wish.

With bent head, he harkened a moment, and—there was no mistaking—a low sob came to his ears. With an air of determination, Dick tapped softly. Dead silence. He tapped again, a bit louder, and spoke cautiously, but distinctly:

"Pat, if you don't come out, I'll come in there."

After a moment, the door slowly opened a crack, and the girl's voice, half-smothered, replied:

"I can't—can't talk to-night, Dick."

"Has that woman been up to mischief? Answer me, Pat. You promised, you know, and your promises aren't made of pie crust." The empha-

sis on the "your" was comforting. Pat wavered. But, no, she must wait till—till some of the sting was gone; until she could talk at least without this silly crying.

"Answer me, Pat."

"I'll—I'll tell you all about it—tomorrow, Dick. I—I—can't talk to-night."

He stood frowning a moment, then put out his hand to the narrow opening.

"To-morrow, then; give me your hand on it."

A trembling, feverish little hand was thrust out, and Dick, holding it firmly in his, bent and kissed it; the first caress he had ever given her.

"Good night, my little girl. Just try to forget everything but that I'm here all the time to back you up."

He turned away, but the door was opened wide, and, with a little cry, Pat stumbled out, clothed as when she had left the living room.

"Dick! Dick!"

At the broken, sobbing whisper, he turned swiftly, and the next moment she was in his arms, clinging to him like a lost, frightened child.

"There, there, sweetheart! Dick's here, and he's got you fast."

Then, fearful of curious ears, he just gathered her up like a baby and carried her out into the shelter of the veranda, where he sat him down with his burden in that same big chair that Joe Ruddock and his bride had once occupied, to Pat's scandalization.

Holding her tenderly, smoothing the dark curls from the hot forehead, he whispered pet names and endearing phrases until gradually the long, shuddering sobs ceased, and she rested quietly, happily, against him. Presently the full moon came swimming around the shoulder of a mountain, and bathed them in waves of silver light.

Dick Thurston, looking down, met Pat's eyes, deep and soft, and filled

with a strange, new glory. His hand touched the delicate face caressingly; then, in a curious tone of entreaty, he whispered:

"Will you kiss me, sweetheart?"

No answer for a moment as the brilliant, questioning eyes met his; then Pat slipped one hand shyly about his neck, and lifted her face. In the clear moonlight he could see the lovely color flooding it from forehead to chin. Pat, his merry, boyish little comrade, was gone; in his arms he held a woman just wakening to her womanhood—his wife.

A kind of reverent gladness stirred the man's heart as their lips met. Into the silence and the blessed wonder came a sudden sting of recollection.

"Dearest"—he lifted her head that he might meet her eyes, and his own held a shamed anger—"dear little wife, will you try to forgive me that I once mistook tinsel for gold? It was a boy's passion for a beautiful face. When once I realized what lay behind, there was no heartbreak in what I felt; only a rage of anger and disgust that I had been so cozened."

Pat's lip quivered. "One thing she said that hurt the most was—that she never could forgive herself—because—because you had loved her so—and you—you would never be the man you might have been on that account. She said you—you were not the man—to—to love again. She pretended to talk to me for my good—and every word had a sting. I must try to make it up to you. I must endeavor to tone down my tomboy ways—before you took me among your Eastern friends, for fear I should shame you before them. That was why, she said, she had urged my going with them—that she might—might train me into what your wife should be. She would teach me to walk and talk and dress myself properly—"

Dick swept her up close in a hurricane of angry protection.

"Listen to me, Pat, and remember I have always told you the truth. That woman is so eaten up with vanity she can't conceive of any one's not taking her at her own valuation. When I showed her plainly that a handsome mask held no charm for me, she—she was ready to chew tacks, she was so mad—and she set herself to upset our happiness." Suddenly a chuckle broke from him. "How pleased she's going to be with her results! She's actually cleared my path—for you were so wrapped up in invincible babyhood, Pat, I thought you'd never wake up. Ashamed of you! I'm aching to take you to a big city where you can get the glad rags that are the only things necessary to show the common herd just what a tearing little beauty I've managed to make my own. Just you go on being your own dear, natural little self, and you needn't fear to stack up against anybody. Did she say anything else?"

"Nothing I didn't know before, only her look and tone turned a thing which had never worried me—into a burning shame."

Dick gritted his teeth.

"Whatever it was, it wasn't that; for shame and you could never touch garments, Pat."

His tone brought a quick, glad color to her face, and it was with an echo of her usual gay laugh that she continued:

"She seemed to have ferreted out the fact that ours is what you elaborately explained to me it was to be—a marriage of convenience whereby I gained a home and you a housekeeper."

Dick drew a deep breath.

"Well, if she keeps her eyes open, she'll find she has another guess coming to-morrow," he declared grimly. "Bah! Let's forget her! Do you realize, Mrs. Thurston, that we are occupying one chair, when there are plenty to go round? Also, that the gen-

eral trend of our present behavior might suggest to an unsympathetic outsider that we were great sillies?"

Pat half started up, then cuddled down comfortably once more.

"We are different," she said demurely.

When this had received due recognition, Dick subjoined soberly:

"You are—different from all the world."

A clock softly chimed twelve.

"I mustn't keep you up any longer." Standing in the quiet moonlight, he fumbled in his pocket a moment, then caught her left hand.

"See." He held up the third finger, on which shone lonely a plain gold band—her wedding ring. "This has bothered me for some time! We got things dreadfully mixed in the beginning, Pat. We got married before we were engaged, so now we've got to go backward and become engaged."

He slipped a second ring upon the slender finger, and Pat gave a gasp of delight at sight of a softly glowing pearl. His lips hushed her thanks.

"Go to bed, Pat. Good night, sweetheart."

CHAPTER XI.

Frances Williston paused in the open doorway, secure that even the brilliance of mid-morning would betray no flaw in her matchless skin; her mauve draperies accenting each charm of face and figure; her golden eyes alight with memory of the wonderful picture her mirror had just visioned. The armor of her egotism had received one or two dents during the past few days, but it being practically impenetrable, no permanent damage had been wrought. A man who once had worshiped at her shrine could not—no matter how fain—turn without some lingering regret, to another—and such another! An unformed tomboy—with freckles on her nose!

Conscious of her effectiveness against the soft gloom of the room beyond, she glanced about for appreciative recognition—and for the first time in all her soft-lapped existence met the derisive grin of defeat.

So engrossed in each other as to be oblivious of any alien presence, Dick and Pat stood a few yards away, the man holding the girl's flushed face in his cupped hands, the while she looked up at him with shining, morning eyes.

"To think"—Dick's voice held a note that Frances Blair had never heard—"to think how narrowly I missed finding you! Life's such a wide sea, sweetheart. It would have been so easy for our little cockles to slip by each other in the night."

He bent his head, and the unseen watcher turned noiselessly.

Half an hour later came a smart rattat on Mrs. Williston's door, and Pat's voice caroled gayly:

"It's time for the lovely grandmamma to have her breakfast, if she means to drive over to meet grandfather."

"So late?" The sweet, languid voice feigned surprise excellently. "I'll be ready in ten minutes."

Well within the limit, Mrs. Williston emerged, habited in her traveling costume of dull blue, a wide hat with drooping plumes of the same color shading her exquisite face and adding burnish to the amber gold of her hair.

"How unpardonable of me to have slept so late! You should have called me before, Edith." Then, catching the significance of the girl's short khaki dress: "You've been riding already?"

"Not yet. The buckboard only holds two, so Dick borrowed Peach—a very gentle horse of Mr. Ruddock's—for you to drive, and he and I are going to ride our horses. That leaves a seat by you for grandfather on the way home. Dick thought you would like to drive, as he said you used to be quite a whip."

This closing sentence effectually quenched the impulse to swift protest against a plan that appealed very little to the banker's wife. Instead, "Charming!" she exclaimed, and smiled over her cup.

When for the second time that morning Mrs. Williston appeared in the doorway, Pat was already in the saddle, holding in a frivolous-minded Tantrum with firm, slender hands. Dick's horse, hobbled, Western fashion, by a bridle thrown over its head, stood by with appreciative eyes and ears directed toward his skittish stable mate, while harnessed to the light buckboard was a rugged, amiable beast, who advertised "No vices!" from each somnolent eye and every angle of his unhandsome, dependable frame; the very apotheosis of safety in horseflesh, warranted not to get out of hand with the feeblest of grandmothers.

With indolent grace, Mrs. Williston shook out the long white chiffon veil she held, preparatory to protecting her priceless complexion from a brisk, sweet wind.

"Careful!"

The quick, peremptory word came from Dick, as at sight of the white object Tantrum half reared and pranced.

Then, all in the fraction of a second, that ego derived from their so widely remote common ancestor which had burned red in the fierce, brutish eyes of Bimbi, the hideous ape, flared up under the white, drooping lids of this beautiful daughter of man. So swift the racing fire ran in her veins to brain and finger tip that it looked as if her natural start of fright had loosed unintentionally her hold upon the fluttering gauze, which the playful wind as swiftly snatched and tossed full across Tantrum's maddened eyes.

There was no time to act or breathe. Richard Thurston's hoarse cry was crushed beneath the dull impact of the girl's slight body, flung to the sward as

the frantic brute spun about in half his length and dashed away. His mate reared, backed nervously, but still remained tethered to his obsession; while the stolid nag harnessed to the buckboard merely snorted contemptuously.

"Is—*is* she dead?"

Dick, raising the still figure of Pat in his arms, only stared one frozen moment into the paling face of the questioner, then strode toward the house.

Brought running by the confusion of Tantrum's exit, Ching Loo flew back and forth under the rapid fire of his master's orders, and after a time came to the beautiful lady who somehow had not dared proffer her services to the white-faced man bending over the couch where Pat lay.

"Misser Thuslum he say me lide by Missy Lady's buckboard. Missy Lady she dlive over to Sliver Horn."

"Very well. How *is*—your mistress?"

"Li'l' missy she say she alite. Say Misser Thuslum he go along Missy Lady. Misser Thuslum he say dam-fido."

The slant eyes and flat, yellow face remained serenely oblivious of the disclosure thus made, but Mrs. Williston somehow was conscious that in this Oriental's opinion li'l' missy's smallest finger counted for more than all her lovely person. A crude country, Colorado!

She would not, however, seem to acknowledge any break, so very slowly and gracefully she entered the living room and passed to the side of the couch where Dick knelt, holding his treasure in his arms, and whispering all manner of mad, sweet words in her ear. Pat had, indeed, escaped with no evil effects other than a wrenched ankle and a bruise or two. While the shock of the fall had robbed her of consciousness for a few moments, her felt hat had protected her head from too violent contact with the ground.

On catching sight of the stately, blue-robed figure, the girl, rose-red to the disordered curls on her forehead, made a shy little movement of withdrawal; but Dick, after a careless half glance over his shoulder, drew her closer for a moment; then, with a last little caress, settled her comfortably among her pillows before rising to his feet, the courteous host.

"I'm sorry to send you off with only Ching's attendance, but, of course, I can't leave my wife; and he's quite trustworthy, so you need have no fears. He will also send a message to the doctor for me from the station."

Mrs. Williston waived all excuse graciously.

"I have been thinking that with Edith laid up, you will not care to be bothered with guests, so I shall make my adieux now, with thanks for a charming visit, and remain at the hotel in Silver Horn to-night, where Mr. Williston can join me in the morning with our baggage. We could only have re-

mained a day or so longer at best, and we shall see you in the East before long, so I think it is hardly worth the fatigue for me to drive back these ten miles for one night. Unless, of course"—with a pretty, gracious gesture—"I can be of some practical use here? Is there anything I can do?"

"Nothing more, thank you," returned Dick ambiguously.

In Reed Williston's stately library—a room his lovely wife rarely enters—there hangs a large painting which the banker explains proudly is a portrait of his granddaughter, Mrs. Richard Thurston, painted by her husband, and counted one of his best works. Save for her fearless, sunny gray eyes, it would be hard to recognize in the radiant face smiling from the canvas the little, half-starved waif, clad in a boy's blue jeans, who faced Dick Thurston one day in his dimlit stable and shrinkingly announced herself as his "value received."

SONG

HAD I a claim to fame?
 Little to honor;
 Save when I spoke her name,
 Gazing upon her,
 Then was I crowned of men,
 More than my seeming.
 Youth's glorious strength again
 Bannered my dreaming.
 So, when our day is past,
 When we lie stilly
 Under the earth at last,
 Clod by white lily,
 Send me neither praise nor sigh,
 Breathe but this in passing by—
 When, empearled with early dew
 The high grass above her
 Waves, and above me too—
 "He was her lover!"

WILLIAM ROSE BENET.

John Tremaine

BY

MARIE VAN VORST



When scarcely more than a boy, John Tremaine runs away from home after the theft of ten thousand dollars from the bank in which he is employed. His elder brother, David, makes good the loss and the matter is hushed up, so that only four people know of it—David, his mother, Leavitt, the family lawyer, and Malvern, the president of the bank. Fifteen years later, John returns, rich and successful, to find the homestead about to be sold for debt and his mother on the point of going North to live with David's widow—the woman to whom John was once engaged—and two sons. John sets to work to redeem and develop the property and to win his mother's confidence and love. On several occasions, as he is working in the fields in laborer's clothes, he meets Malvern's daughter, Isobel, who is strongly attracted to him before she knows who he is.

CHAPTER XIV.

JOHN laid away his workman's clothes, ceased to be a farmer, and turned, with the same interest that had characterized his agricultural efforts, to the opening of the Blythe Mountain mines.

He had been skirting Blythe Mountain one afternoon, planning, with his engineers, the sinking of the shaft, indicating sites for miners' houses, and he was walking slowly home across the evening fields, swinging his stick, musing upon the material success that met him everywhere, and contrasting it with the arid loneliness of his inner life. He had won his mother; Samuel Leavitt loved him: these were his victories. He could not think more of himself without bitterness in his heart.

He came up to the bars of the old south pasture gate. Behind him were the high-grown, grassy meadows of the Malvern property, an estate now as run-down as his own had been, and with less likelihood of ever being reclaimed.

The landscape lay soft and lovely under the light of the Southern evening. The old house stood on a rise of ground, behind a forest of oaks and beeches; to the left ran the river, sunk low between its red banks; and over all spread the pale sky in which, toward the west, hung the evening star.

John lit a cigar and leaned on the bars, remembering as he did so how, fifteen years ago, on just such a summer night, he had leaned on this old silvery fence, his heart sore within him.

His passions were strong and deep, but his will met them at every turn and chained them. From the hour when he had learned that Julia had broken faith with him, he had cut her out of his thoughts. A photograph of her between her sons was on his mother's bureau, and he had seen her to be still beautiful. The picture had struck him like a blow, but over and over again he had forced himself to look at it until he could do so without emotion. He had become a cynic and a misanthrope, bitter and unscrupulous as far as women were concerned.

On the day when he had run away from home, Julia had been singing at Riverside in the old room, and he distinctly recalled every word of the song:

"I ask no gold to gild my store,
For heavy cares with riches come.
I want one sole thing more and more—
I want your love to follow me, follow me
home."

Years later, in a drawing-room in Johannesburg, the wife of a colonel in the army had sung this same song, in a voice quite as charming as Julia Tremaine's had been. This woman had sung it to John Tremaine, and he had loved her—or had thought he loved her—for two or three years. As he smoked now, leaning on the fence, he remembered this woman and how she had died of fever in the plains, in his arms, while her husband was away in England. "Follow me, follow me home"—the memory had poignancy and sadness.

There were other memories, and they followed after; but they were fleeting, and could not hold him. He threw down his half-smoked cigar, trod it out in the dry grass, and stood with his hands in his pockets, watching the river pale to gray as the evening sky grew cold.

Well, love had not followed him home! He had brought success back to Virginia; he would leave upon his birthplace the same mark of a strong man's power that he had left everywhere he had gone. But what could it do in return for him?

His attitude of mind had created a spirit of harmony between his mother and himself. But as far as he was concerned, he would be obliged to content himself within the boundaries of his home. There was nothing for him outside.

He was so intent on his own thoughts that he did not hear the approach of some one over the long grass, and he started when a voice at his side said

authoritatively, with a little laugh behind the words:

"Will you let down the bars, please?"

Tremaine turned to see Isobel, who, in a summer dress, hatless, stood with one hand on her hip and the other held out to him frankly, smiling at him.

"Mr. Tremaine," she said, "I think we have met several times before."

He lifted his hat and shook hands with her.

"I am afraid my disguise was not very successful. You really knew me all the time, didn't you?"

"Was it a disguise?" said Isobel Malvern. "They looked like very honest clothes; you seemed a very honest workman."

"I was all that," said Tremaine. "But what finally gave me away to you?"

She laughed. "Your handkerchief," she said.

"Not my manners?"

"They were rather bad, to tell you the truth. Have you any better ones?"

Tremaine smiled. "They say I am a hard master, do they?"

"Yes."

She looked at him with frank liking and interest.

"Long before I saw you as a workman, I met you down here in the old pasture. Do you remember when I met you first, Mr. Tremaine?"

He laughed and nodded. "Do you really remember?"

"I cried," said Isobel frankly. "I think you dried my tears."

Tremaine laughed. "I did more! I kissed you and set you down. How fast you ran away!"

"Not so far as you did that same night. Do you remember?"

He made no reply.

"My mammy told me, when she put me to bed: 'Marse John Tremaine's done run away.' It frightened me—'running away' seemed such a wild thing to do—and for years I seemed to

see you running, running— And now," she added, smiling charmingly, "you've come home!"

They were walking on the little path that wound about through the pastures and meadows up the hill slope that rose softly between Malvern House and Riverside. He was tempted to go with her home. It was long since he had walked like this, side by side with a graceful young woman, charming, sympathetic, and free. She charmed him, she gave him pleasure, and he knew that she was absolutely forbidden fruit. He stopped and stood looking at her, half thoughtful, half smiling. He knew that she expected him to finish the walk with her, and, from now on, he would have to begin to play the part of the boor, the rude, indifferent man.

"Yes," he said shortly, "I've come home—the inveterate bad penny that turns up some time or other—the rolling stone that finally rattles downhill and stops. Good evening, Miss Malvern."

He lifted his hat and extended his hand, and bade her good-by abruptly, and the girl continued her homeward way through the summer meadows.

CHAPTER XV.

Mrs. Tremaine was cutting the leaves among her honeysuckle vines when, the following afternoon, Isobel rode over, and, giving her horse to Bob, ran up to the porch and threw her arms around her friend's neck.

"Have you heard?"

Mrs. Tremaine had heard much. She had heard many things she would have been glad to forget.

"Nothing very new or interesting, Isobel."

"Really, have you not been told?"

"Nothing that could make me smile as you are smiling, my dear child."

Isobel flushed delightfully.

"The great event has occurred, dear-

est, and quite naturally. I have met your mysterious son."

Mrs. Tremaine put her shears and her basket, full of leaves and blossoms, on the table, and the two women sat down.

"You have met John?" asked the mother.

"Yes," nodded Isobel, holding her riding crop across her knees; "down in the south pasture. He stood there, smoking, by the fence, and looked just as a returned traveler should look. He is not a bit terrible."

Mrs. Tremaine could not freely meet Isobel's smile without answering it.

"I believe he can be terrible."

Isobel did not seem to hear her.

"We had a delightful time, dearest. He remembered me as perfectly as I remembered him."

"Isobel!" exclaimed Mrs. Tremaine. "You remembered John?"

The girl laughed. "I saw him down in the old pasture, just where I met him yesterday, the night he went away from Virginia."

Mrs. Tremaine looked at her incredulously.

"You are dreaming. You were a baby."

"I remember—I always remember; and I think he is perfectly charming."

Isobel's enthusiasm and the fire in her eyes, her eager interest, her appreciation of John, had a dual effect upon Mrs. Tremaine. The girl's praise was balm, but she could not let herself enjoy it. She had known from the very first that John could not but charm a woman.

"We walked up through the fields," continued Isobel. "We talked together as if we had known each other all our lives!"

Mrs. Tremaine put her hand to her heart.

"You are pale," exclaimed Isobel, drawing near to her. "Are you ill, dearest?"

"It's the heat, and the odor of the vines is so powerful."

Isobel touched her hand, and her eyes wandered from her friend. Mrs. Tremaine watched her face, and saw that she dreamed, still smiling as she thought of John Tremaine.

"Why, she has fallen in love with him at first sight!" thought the mother. She gathered herself together, and, taking advantage of the fact that her emotion had aroused Isobel's alarm, said to her:

"My dear child, the doctor tells me that I must take a rest cure. I shall be obliged to be very quiet and see no one for several weeks."

"That does not mean me, dearest?"

"Every one, for a time."

"Let me come and be your nurse. Let me take you to Malvern."

Mrs. Tremaine fortified herself for her task, and finally succeeded in persuading Isobel of the fact that she must not come to Riverside until Mrs. Tremaine should send for her. When she bade Isobel good-by finally, she saw that the brightness was gone from the girl's face, and her heart smote her.

When John came in that evening, dressed for dinner, he wore in the lapel of his coat a little bunch of meadow-sweet. Mrs. Tremaine had seen the same flowers in Isobel's belt that afternoon.

"John," she said, "you did not tell me that you had met Isobel Malvern at last."

"You knew that I have met her several times. We have already proved to each other several things of importance."

"Such as what?"

"That the man must not be judged by the cloth he wears."

"Why did you not tell her frankly who you were the first time you saw her in the fields?"

"It amused me," he said, "and I am not often amused."

He saw his mother's agitation, but did not take pity on her.

"She is a more agreeable companion than her father," said John. "And, after all, the third time she knew me for a gentleman, in spite of overalls and a flannel shirt."

He laughed.

His mother saw that he was slipping into one of his ungracious moods, and it facilitated her task. She said quietly:

"I have asked Isobel not to come to Riverside again for the present."

He waited for a few seconds, then said slowly: "So she told me."

"Told you? When?"

"We met in the south pasture just now, as I came in. I put down the bars for her once again."

And she had given him the meadow-sweet.

After a second, John said: "You have few pleasures."

He saw her clasp her hands, and there was a sob in her throat as she said: "It has ceased to be a pleasure."

He went over and gave her his arm. At the door, Nolan announced the evening meal. It was eaten almost in silence.

That night, when he went upstairs, he said harshly:

"Do not give yourself any uneasiness regarding any sentimental complications in Riverside. I shall be gone in a year, and I promise you that Isobel Malvern and I will remain as complete strangers as we are now."

CHAPTER XVI.

The relation between Malvern and his daughter was very close; she had tried to take her mother's place in his life. It was a bitter thing to Malvern not to be able to give her everything in the world. With her breeding and her looks, he felt that she should make a brilliant marriage, and the fact that he could not give her a fortune was galling to him.

Isobel quickly saw that, for some reason or other of which she was unaware, she could not talk to her father about John Tremaine, and her own feelings soon made it difficult for her to mention his name.

But one day she took her courage in both hands and asked him: "What do you think of Mr. Tremaine, daddy?"

"I don't think about him at all," returned Malvern shortly. "Why do you ask me?"

They had finished dinner and come out together into the library.

"It's only natural I should ask, isn't it? He is becoming a personage in the district. Besides, he's the son of my dearest friend. And then he's a romantic figure. People don't return after fifteen years' absence every day, and, when they do, they usually come back paupers and burdens on their families, and not like Mr. Tremaine."

"Well?" Her father looked at her sharply. "Just how has he come back?"

"Rich and successful."

"When did you see him?"

And Isobel, instantly on guard, answered indifferently: "I met him one afternoon." She continued: "You knew him as a boy, didn't you, father?"

"As a young man, yes, in the bank."

"He was gloomy then, they say, reserved and unhappy?"

"I know nothing of him now, but a man who begins life by running away from home usually keeps something of acridness in his character."

The following week, Leavitt dined alone with Malvern, who said to him:

"John Tremaine's return, Leavitt, is a singular romance, isn't it?"

Throughout the dinner, Riverside and its occupants had not been mentioned.

Leavitt lifted his fine eyebrows. "I assure you, my dear friend, that I was never so surprised at anything in my life."

The lawyer spoke as if startling happenings were everyday affairs with

him, whereas nothing could have been more unruffled or more devoid of incident than his peaceful existence. The two men were friends of long standing; they had ridden, smoked, talked, dined, and uncommunicatively suffered together, as neighbors do in far-off country districts, for a good part of a lifetime. In every crisis of the county, these two faithful souls had stood together, and in the personal crises of their own lives they had remained sympathetic companions. They sat before the open window, smoking their cigars, like two old campaigners with their memories behind them. These after-dinner chats were frequent occurrences. They seemed to sit again in the glow of other bivouac fires.

"He is going to be," said Leavitt, "the most important figure in Virginia, suh."

The lawyer's voice had the charming cadence of a soft old song. His gentle nature and the delicate quality of his mind lent grace to everything he said.

"I had an unusual conversation with Tremaine once," said Malvern, "and I trust I shall not find it necessary to meet him often."

"Malvern," said the lawyer, "I think your point of view is cruel. The John Tremaine who ran away from Redlands is a different proposition from the man John Tremaine is to-day. His character has been purified and redeemed by fifteen years of struggle."

"I confess that there was much in the boy who ran away that charmed me," said Malvern. "To tell you the truth, I preferred him to David; and when I discovered that he was a thief, it was one of the most surprising revelations I have ever had in my life."

"Poor Molly!" murmured the lawyer.

"The man I saw the other day," said Malvern sternly, "was an arrogant, self-important parvenu."

Leavitt leaned forward in his chair.

"By gad, Redmond! If you say this, you do not see John Tremaine."

"Your affection for the family blinds you, Sam."

Leavitt poured himself out a glass of Madeira and drank it slowly. "I think I see more keenly, because I am so near to them—both. I was frightfully prejudiced against John. I cannot keep it up. *You* couldn't, either, if you knew him! There's something about him——"

Malvern laughed.

"Plausible—pulls the wool over people's eyes."

"Now this Blythe Mountain affair." Leavitt straightened himself in his chair. "A big enterprise, Malvern."

"Can you take interest in any enterprise, Sam, when it is in the hands of a thief?"

Leavitt stirred.

"Don't call him that," he said gently. "Fifteen years ago we all buried that story"—he pointed over his shoulder—"in my little office—you and David and his mother and I."

Malvern poured himself out a glass of wine, and drank it.

"He has had the effrontery," he continued, "to offer me the presidency of the Blythe Mountain Iron Company."

"My dear Malvern!"

"You can understand that I refused."

"You did?"

"Don't you see it was only a bribe?"

There was a silence for a moment, then Leavitt said: "I don't regard this as you do."

Malvern smiled slowly. "Perhaps he offered you two thousand shares of stock?"

The Madeira had brought a faint color to the lawyer's cheeks; Malvern's words deepened it, but he met his friend's eyes clearly.

"He did."

Malvern leaned forward and put his hand on his friend's knee. "You did not take it, suh," he said defiantly.

"I did *not* take it; but," Leavitt continued hotly, "it's money made out of

Virginian soil, in a concern handled by honorable gentlemen."

"By gad!" said Malvern, staring at his friend and dropping back into his chair.

CHAPTER XVII.

One day John spoke of Julia.

"What sort of a wife did Julia make David?"

Mrs. Tremaine, glad to have him show an interest in the Northern family, answered: "One never knows really very much about married lives. I always felt that no one was good enough for David."

She waited a moment, and John said: "It would naturally seem so to you."

He did not pursue the question, understanding that there had been no extravagant happiness in the marriage; but Mrs. Tremaine, interested, continued:

"I think no one but myself understood David's sensitive, exquisite nature, shy and reserved." There was no enthusiasm on the part of her son. "David was so noble, such a marvelous character. His rectitude——"

John, from where he was sitting, reached out for a pamphlet on French peas.

It was in his mother's mind what pleasure it would give her, and satisfaction, if John would now speak of his brother, refer in some delicate way to him, showing thus that he remembered David's protection of his name; but John said nothing. As his mother looked away, John saw the tenderness in her face, the mounting color on her delicate cheeks. He knew what her griefs had been and what her worship was for this beloved elder son. His face clouded.

"He was the most stainless judge on the bench," said his mother, "and the youngest judge when he died. I remember some one said of him at the Century Club that to no judge could

the term 'your honor' be more properly applied."

"Julia makes, at all events, an excellent mother," remarked John.

Mrs. Tremaine answered and her voice was cold. "Yes," she said, "she is an excellent mother." Then she added, after a second: "I have always believed that a woman is not often an excellent mother and an excellent wife. I do not criticize Julia; she has a cold nature."

By October of the same year, in Redlands and the district down the river, as far as Craig's Corners, all the way to Richmond, John Tremaine had created a sensation.

Money, energy, and talent had done wonders in these few months. John conceived a plan in the morning, and, if possible, executed it before night. He had arrived in June; in August he discovered iron; the same month the Blythe Mountain Iron Company was formed; and by autumn the shaft was opened.

Before the homestead the big avenue had been graveled and widened; the house had a new roof, and shone in snowy white and green.

The vines had grown crimson on the trellises; corn had grown sweet and been gathered; hay had been cut and stored. There was comparative peace between the negroes and the Italians, and black and white now worked together under John's stern and just management. The mines interested him; they were the realization of a dream. But the fields were like jewels to him—rich treasure houses, full of promise.

The vague stories regarding his youth appeared to be entirely forgotten, and the mysteries that had surrounded him in the past were blotted out. Rumors came to Redlands of the South African Tremaine, the Virginian who had returned unexpectedly to his country.

The Irishman's worship of his mas-

ter, mammy's adoration, Samuel Leavitt's slow, decided approval, John's daily presence under her roof, his courtesy and consideration for her, all drew his mother to him. The pride that had suffered through John in the past was being assuaged by John in the present. She was growing keen for John, tender for John, ambitious for John; and hourly it became more impossible for her to bring before herself any situation that would put the man she now knew in the wrong.

Lonely herself—though she was no longer so lonely now—she began to understand his loneliness. Watching his silhouette as he sat in the window, his handsome head outlined against the light, she wondered more than once what woman's hands had drawn that head to her breast, and she grew to be jealous of him and for him. Now how she would resent it if any one wounded him, gave him pain! Often she called her growing affection weakness, and blamed herself for it, but the knowledge of his crime did not make her more severe in her judgment of him now. Whenever she heard anything in his favor, she warmed toward the world.

John urged his mother on to extravagances. New dresses and charming things came to her from the North; he drove her in a motor around the country; he showed her parts of the hills she had never known. Her life slipped into easy ways.

Throughout the following months, the friendship between mother and son ripened. They grew nearer to each other every day, and Mrs. Tremaine's heart stirred at the stories of John's adventures, and she longed, in this new life, to make him forget his lonely years.

Meanwhile, Isobel, unable to bear her exile from Riverside, had gone North with her father, and there was no one to disturb the intercourse between

mother and son—no woman to bring temptation in his way.

CHAPTER XVIII.

For a year John saw nothing of Isobel, who had stayed North all winter and in the summer went to Newport. As the autumn approached once more, he realized how far apart their paths lay.

One afternoon, as he was directing some half dozen Italians in the building of a greenhouse, he turned to see Isobel riding across the fields. Without distinct rudeness he could not refuse to speak to her. The mare came up softly, the pretty advance of her hoofs and gentle trot through the grass making a pleasant sound.

He heard Isobel say, "Good morning, Mr. Tremaine," and went up to her. She leaned down gayly to him, holding out her hand in its riding glove, sparkling and smiling. Tremaine knew in a moment, by the color in her face, by the darkening of her eyes, that she was glad to see him, and he knew in an instant that he was far too glad to see her.

The curves of her figure, the life and beauty of her face, the heaving of her breast, her blue eyes full of joy, of life, and the pleasure of this meeting, were the sweetest things that ever had met his eyes.

On her left cheek a tiny mole intensified the fairness of her skin. As she leaned down, it seemed almost as if she were leaning into John's arms. He took her hand and looked at her, his heart beating quickly.

"Doesn't such a day make you want to ride, Mr. Tremaine?" she asked.

And he answered: "Oh, I use all my horses for the plow."

She let her hand slip down along her mare's neck. She did not know what to say to him; she had thought of nothing for weeks but of seeing him

again, and now he stood there, indifferent, with an expression that she had always thought his face could wear—one of coldness, almost of disdain.

"You ought to be riding," she said; "the country is so beautiful. I seemed to ride through flame."

His look followed hers as she glanced toward the warm fields.

"Virginia is the paradise of the world! I'm sure you thought it was, didn't you, when you came back from your wanderings?"

John answered her shortly: "I thought of Virginia as little as possible during my wanderings, as you call them. I was absorbed in what I was doing. I generally am. I have a talent for forgetting the things that are not under my hand. I returned to Virginia for mercenary reasons purely."

If he had thought out what he could say to disenchant her, he could hardly have found better words. She drew a little breath of surprise and said: "Oh!"

Then she laughed and recovered herself.

"I am sorry," she said, "but I don't quite believe you. Not that I know you, of course, but the traits you mention are not Southern, are not like a Tremaine."

"That may be, but it is nevertheless true."

His curt rudeness did not ruffle her temper, and she continued to provoke him by her good humor. She was not without experience. A beauty at sixteen, she had received much attention, and in her four years of social life she had made her own philosophy. Her sensitive mind and warm heart rendered her no mean match for a misanthrope.

"Women are not very keen observers, after all," she said. "They say a woman sees only with one eye."

In spite of himself, Tremaine asked: "How do you mean?"

"She always has the other eye on the man she loves."

John stooped and picked up a stone at his feet. He threw it carelessly; it hit a tree, and the hollow and rotten wood rang out.

"You mean she keeps an eye on the *men* she loves," he said rudely.

She laughed. "Of course, we are born faithless."

"Well, you are the only woman whom I have ever heard acknowledge that." He smiled. "Aren't you riding over to see my mother?"

"Yes," she said, "and I can scarcely wait. You know, I have been away nearly ten months."

Tremaine raised his eyebrows as he said: "As long as that?" But he showed no other interest.

She walked her mare slowly, and talked down to him cheerfully, but he had the grace to accompany her, and she ignored his unfriendly humor.

"Since I have come back, I have heard nothing but 'John Tremaine' on all sides," she said. "My father tells me that you are the most popular man this side of Richmond."

"With the exception of your father, Mr. Leavitt, and a few others, there are only niggers and white trash this side of Richmond."

"Nonsense, Mr. Tremaine! You forget Craig's Corners, fifteen miles up the river, with a population of a thousand people, all of them crazy around election time."

He asked skeptically: "You don't mean to say you are interested in politics?"

"I am interested in everything about Virginia," she answered steadily. "I had to go to Europe to know what a good patriot I am. Look at this."

She drew the mare up, and pulled from the breast of her riding coat a little gold locket, holding it before his eyes. Her chin was lifted so that the fine contour of her neck and cheek were as clear cut as if carved from coral.

"Do you know what is in that locket, Mr. Tremaine?"

"What a coquette she is!" he thought, and answered: "No doubt the picture of one of your victims."

She let the locket fall, saying: "I shall not tell you."

His continued rudeness had taken off the edge of her good humor; but as Tremaine saw her changed countenance and realized his brutality, he said, with compunction: "Please do tell me what is in the locket."

They had passed the Italian shanties, where his model gardens began, and her voice was cold when she spoke again.

"You have done wonders with Riverside. It must have been a fine sensation to have regenerated the property."

He put his hand on Netty's bridle and held her still.

"What is in the locket?"

"I do not wonder you are so popular. Father says they will make you go to Congress."

"What is in the locket?"

Its golden disk lay on her breast against her tan coat. Tremaine reached up and took the ornament between his fingers.

"I shall open it."

She bent down close to him. Her hair nearly touched his, and he was invaded by her. She sat serenely, while his clumsy fingers trembled, but he managed to open the locket, and under its glass saw rough grains that looked like sand. She nodded and laughed triumphantly.

"The soil of Virginia! I carry it everywhere. I seem to feel the beating of my country's heart on mine. Of course, you think me awfully silly, don't you, Mr. Tremaine? I reckon I am." And she caught up her reins, spoke to Netty, and started away from him.

He did not follow her, but let her go, turned back by the way they had

come, and struck into the forest farther on by the pool. It was late when he turned up at the house. Isobel had been gone some time, and he found that Leavitt was to share the evening meal.

After this, on every occasion of his meeting with Isobel, he took pains—so it seemed to her—to be harsh and rude. Where at first she had thought that she had never seen so charming a person, she was now forced to acknowledge that she had never met so ungracious a man.

Since returning, she had been several times to Riverside, and Tremaine had not always been able to avoid her. That was the word, however—avoid. She saw that he purposely avoided her, and she could not but find it strange that he should take the trouble to go out of his way to make her uncomfortable.

She sometimes tried to recall the evening when they had walked back together to Malvern. The present Tremaine was not the same man who had talked to her so charmingly that night. And yet she admired him more and more. He drew her, and wherever she went people spoke his name with admiration. She was at first piqued, then her feelings made her suffer, and then it grew difficult to go to Riverside at all.

Mrs. Tremaine herself was embarrassed when John and Isobel met; and sometimes, when the girl sat alone with her friend, long silences would fall between them, and Isobel understood that the mother's heart was not at ease, and that this strange man and his strange humors had affected the perfect friendship existing between the two women. Isobel hated him at times, but could not hate him long; disturbing as was his presence, for nothing in the world would she have foregone this new interest at her heart.

Malvern House upon its hill, surrounded by the unkempt, unproductive property, became like a watchtower

from which Isobel viewed Riverside, the district, and her own little past. From her window she could see the rolling country, the river, and Blythe Mountain, on whose sides, through the autumn foliage, great swathes had been cut where the mines had been opened and the earth tossed up by the men who had sunk the shaft. It was a noble hill, and it had been nobly scarred.

The property of Riverside, too, already showed the results of order and method. Isobel saw the little, clustered shanties of the Italians, where John had placed them in groups, down by the riverside. She saw the shacks that had been built at the mines for the miners. Strange people had come to help John Tremaine get gold out of the land.

Isobel had been a belle in Richmond for several seasons. Her picture had figured in the New York papers; and in New York itself, at several big functions, the Southern beauty had created quite a little storm by her unusual loveliness. She felt, as she looked back on her conquests—for she had made them—that she knew something of life. But her heart had never been remotely touched, and, as she put it to herself, she would never marry "until she was carried off her feet." She could not understand marriage in any other way, she had naively told the last man who had asked her to be his wife.

Now, down here in Virginia—Virginia which she adored—within the boundaries of her home, in the place she loved the best, the Thing had happened. Isobel herself scarcely knew it. She was not prepared to say to herself yet that she had fallen hopelessly in love, although she meditated on her state of mind far more than was good for her, was unhappy, began to lose her color, and lived waiting for chance meetings with Mr. Tremaine and wondering what his mood would be.

When she was with Mrs. Tremaine, she waited tensely for some mention to

be made of John, but Mrs. Tremaine never spoke of him.

Isobel approached the house sometimes by way of the kitchen, and mammy's enthusiasms and eulogies were delightful to her. She loved to linger in the fragrant old kitchen, while the negress made marvelous pastry or washed and ironed fine little things for her mistress.

CHAPTER XIX.

Tremaine's position in regard to the Blythe Mountain Iron Company was a singularly unpretentious one. He refused all positions of confidence, although he had organized the company, but took the working superintendence of the mine itself. It was considered to be a fad with him, and, as he was apparently very peculiar, this was classed with his other eccentricities.

A little office, in reality nothing more than a cabin, was thrown up for him at the foot of the mountain, and there he directed the men and constituted himself a sort of boss overseer.

The organization of the company and his meetings with its members took him often to Richmond, as well as to Washington and New York. He never left Riverside, even for a day, without regret, and always came back to it with pleasure. In coming to Virginia, he had set himself to accomplish a certain task within a given time, and he did not intend to lose any of that time.

He had lately purchased a tract of some twenty thousand acres adjoining the Blythe Mountain property, and this had become the property of the Blythe Mountain Iron Company, he himself taking five hundred thousand dollars' worth of stock in payment for the joint lands. Two hundred and fifty thousand dollars' worth of stock had been sold at par to raise the working capital necessary to develop and work the mines. He intended opening a railroad connec-

tion between Richmond and the mines. And shortly after the addition of his last purchase, the tracts to the north of the mountain and skirting the Malvern property proved to be rich in coal. The outlook was superb.

By the autumn of the year following his return to Virginia, John found himself drawn into certain Richmond festivities. He had become *persona grata* to the people there; his figure could not remain unmarked. It amused and interested him to touch for the first time something of the social life of his State, and for reasons of his own he came somewhat out of his hermitlike seclusion and extended his hands to meet those extended to him. He found himself staying in Richmond now and again for dinners. The women looked at him with admiring eyes, the men with scarcely less admiration. The warmth and hospitality of the South spread itself around him. They were hero worshipers in Virginia; they were appreciative, and they were pleased to welcome back as one of their own people such a man as John Tremaine.

He bought a couple of hunters and went to the meets, riding over the wonderful autumn country by the side of some graceful, beautiful woman, who would have asked nothing better than to have charmed him.

At one hunt dinner, after he had watched her throughout the hour spent at the table, John found himself standing in a corner of the drawing-room, next to Isobel Malvern. He had thought at dinner that her dress was tasteful and suited her well, although from his indifference it would have been impossible to imagine that he had even remarked her.

Her greatest charm was the sense of youth she gave. She was like the vision of some April budding tree, some young, graceful branch in flower. Extremely slender, rather debonair, she had about her a certain boyish charm,

sometimes not without grace in the adolescent woman. On Tremaine she had the effect of a spring day, of sunlight; and disenchanted with the world as he was, the effect was delicious.

As they stood entirely alone together, he could not, without direct insult, ignore her, and Isobel had no intention of ignoring him.

"What a beautiful horse you rode!" she said. "I think I never saw so lovely a creature. There is nothing like her in the county."

"You think so?" said Tremaine, and added on a sudden impulse: "I will send her over to Malvern to-morrow. Ride her, will you? I shall not ride any more for the present."

"We are not in Spain," said Isobel, "and I shouldn't think of accepting such a sacrifice on your part. I am sure you want to ride."

"Then you won't take her?"

She hesitated for a moment, then said frankly: "I'll ride her with pleasure for a little while. It's good of you. Thanks."

"Otherwise she would stand in the stable and not even be exercised," he said ungraciously. "It's a kindness to the horse."

There was no one like him in the room, in his pink coat, with his dark good looks, his indifference, and just that trace of melancholy that attracts a woman.

In another second, some one came up and asked Isobel to dance. The man's name was not on her card. Tremaine stood looking about the room, and Isobel hesitated, and found herself saying:

"I am a little tired; I think I will not dance this time."

Tremaine heard her, and at that moment saw Malvern crossing the room toward them. He was stopped on the way by the guest of the evening—a banker from San Francisco, in whose

honor the meet and the dinner had been given.

The two men advanced toward Isobel together.

Suddenly Tremaine turned to her with the charming smile she had seen but once, on the day when they had walked through the summer fields.

"I looked for you to-day at the hunt," he said. "Why did you not ride?"

He saw the color deepen in her cheeks at his interest and his heart smote him.

"Oh, I don't jump. I never take fences."

"You sit your horse better than any of them. You must jump. You will ride Wild Cat, and I will teach you to take fences. I thought every Southern woman rode cross-country."

And she said a little sharply: "Perhaps you don't know much about Southern women, Mr. Tremaine."

At that moment, Malvern and the San Francisco man came up together. Malvern and John Tremaine exchanged the usual greetings. There was as little cordiality about them as was possible under the circumstances. Malvern drew his daughter's hand within his arm. But the San Francisco guest put out his hand to John Tremaine with a cordiality and a warmth that cast a little glow over the group.

"Well," he said earnestly, "when my brother told me your name, I said to him: 'Do you mean to tell me it's 'Big' Tremaine?' 'Virginia thinks he's pretty big,' he said. And I told him that they didn't half realize *how* big you are!"

Tremaine laughed. "Nonsense!"

But the moment was not without a certain glow for him.

The banker turned to Malvern. "When I was out in Reekie last year—South Africa, you know, Mr. Malvern—this John Tremaine was the only thing in sight. Diamond mines; some gold, I think; public institutions; not to speak of charity."

"Oh, come," said Tremaine.

The older man put his hand on John's shoulder. "And the deuce of the matter was," he continued, "that you were off on some miserable hunt or other, and I couldn't meet you."

"Too bad!" said Tremaine.

"You see, I am from Virginia myself, and I was mighty proud to think a Virginian had made such a mark in English territory. But I never thought we should meet like this, in Richmond at a hunt ball."

In the distance, behind the palms at the end of the room, the musicians began to play.

"Mr. Tremaine got the brush to-day," said Isobel. And the banker laughed, and said: "Of course he would."

John turned to the girl, and, although there was no name on her card resembling his, said to her: "I think this is our dance."

It seemed to Isobel that she could scarcely believe her ears; the very notes of the music had for her the most marvelous meaning. She withdrew her hand from her father's arm, and gave it to Tremaine. The other couples had begun to dance, and he led her out upon the floor.

John Tremaine's mare, Wild Cat, ate her oats in one of the stalls of Malvern House stables. For reasons of her own, Isobel did not tell her father that she was riding John Tremaine's horse.

Tremaine himself apparently forgot his promise to teach her to ride cross-country, and after the Richmond ball a week or two elapsed before she saw him again. Then, one October day, she met him by chance in the old red road by the river, and they were both riding. Isobel saw him coming toward her, and her pulse began to beat. She knew that, unless he turned his back directly upon her, they would have to speak.

The dance with him in the Richmond ballroom had comprised in its few short moments the greatest excitement of her

life. They had danced well together; she had been proud to be his partner. He had not danced before that evening, and did not dance again. When he had given her back to her father, he had left the house almost immediately, and Isobel, on her drive back to the hotel, where she and her father had been staying, had thought of nothing but the bewildering and heavenly fact that, though it was only for a dance, she had been in his arms.

Now as he came up to her, she discovered in a moment that the agreeable mood in which she had last seen him was not to be repeated. He lifted his hat, but his face was cold and indifferent.

"You don't ride cross-country?" he asked her shortly. "I thought you Southern women were great riders."

She smiled to herself at the fact that he went back so abruptly to their conversation in Richmond, just as if its thread had not been broken.

"What do you think of her?" she asked. "Does she seem to be in good form? We try to take the best care of her, but she must go back to Riverside. I can't kept her any longer."

"As you like," he said coldly. "I shall not ride her again. I shall probably sell her in Richmond at the horse show."

He pursued his question: "Why don't you jump?" And she answered, a little annoyed:

"I should not be surprised if you thought that I was afraid! Do you think so?"

He evaded impolitely: "You wouldn't confess it if you were, would you?"

They halted their horses in the sandy road by the river bank. Below them the stream ran over its red bed and the line of scarlet growth bordered it like a flame. To the left spread the fields; farther on, the woodland cut across the property and ran deeply into the forests that skirted the mines. All the

fences, save the one that marked the division between the Tremaine and the Malvern estates, had been razed to the ground; there was nothing to mar or to break the beautiful suite of fields from river to horizon.

The girl pursued: "You think I am afraid to jump?"

She sat and smiled at him from under her soft hat. The little mole was lost in a flood of color that mounted in her cheeks. Her clear eyes were like wells, in which a man's soul might reflect itself, or from which a thirsty traveler might drink. He had a savage impulse to take her in his arms, to kiss her ruthlessly. The desire came upon him so brutally that he was brutal in his reply:

"What, in Heaven's name, does it matter what I think or do not think? A woman's reasons, even if she gives them, are likely to be false."

Isobel could not know how severely he had judged himself for his weakness at the ball. She could not know that he had taken himself severely to task for the momentary indulgence of his feelings, and for the fact that he was keeping his promise to his mother badly and creating a situation that he knew was untenable for them both.

"Oh, what a cruel man you are!" she cried, goaded by his tone and by his rudeness. "I understand now what people mean when they say you are a hard master." She bit her lip as if to silence herself, then added, looking at him fearlessly: "My mother, one of the Southern women you did not know, was a famous cross-country rider. She was killed in a fall, taking a fence just below our farm. My father carried her home. I have given my word of honor not to jump."

Tremaine, deeply ashamed, exclaimed: "I beg your pardon. How could I know? How could I understand?"

"How could you understand, indeed?" Isobel retorted, throwing up her

pretty head. "You could not understand a woman. I don't know the kind of creatures you judge me by, but you have been unfortunate." She had gained control of her feelings, but not of her recklessness. She pursued: "You don't believe me even now—you know me so little, even now, that you think I am afraid!"

She turned Wild Cat's head, and, before he could prevent her, started at a gallop. He followed, but Isobel had the better horse. She paid no attention to his command to stop. Farther on, at the foot of the pasture, was the fence, standing—Tremaine knew it—in rotten ground. Wild Cat took the fence, and he saw Isobel on the horse for a second in the air. Then, as Wild Cat came to ground, one of her forefeet caught in a rabbit hole. She fell, and Tremaine saw no more.

CHAPTER XX.

He carried her to Malvern—a long seven miles—on his horse; she lay in his arms, white and motionless. He had dashed water from the stream over her face, her hair lay wet against her brows. Though the heaving of her breast was almost imperceptible, she was not dead. Under their heavy white lids, her blue eyes were dark as the flowers of the gentian. She was a mute reproach to him; never could a woman have spoken to him more impressively than did this little, wounded girl. What a brute he had been to her!

The fire was gone from her now, as well as her mockery and wit. He had stamped out those sparks which had charmed him against his will. She was at his mercy now—her head against his breast. He rode slowly, cursing the ruts, picking his way, driving his horse with one hand, and holding her as well as he might. He watched the handkerchief over her wound stain red, and breathed something like a prayer.

It failed to occur to him at this moment that she had only borne him out in his opinion of a woman's sense of honor. She had broken her word to her father; she had been a moral coward in order to prove that she was not a physical one. His only thought was: What would Malvern say? How could he face the father with this burden in his arms?

He scarcely knew how he reached the big house, or who helped him, but he carried her up the steps and laid her upon the lounge, giving her up to her servants and her father. He left her with them, and, after telephoning for his mother and for the doctor, went into the living room to wait.

Here every object spoke of the little woman of the house—the opened piano with its scattered music, the workstand with her work; this Southern beauty was not only a sportswoman. Everywhere in cups and vases were arranged great bunches of autumn leaves. There were violets, too, and other beautiful flowers, and even then he wondered, with a sudden jealousy, who had sent them to her. With irony and bitterness, he thought of his own existence; of all that he had to offer to a woman, and the impossibility of giving it to her.

While he walked to and from the door, it opened, and Malvern came up to him. On his face was an old anguish, revived and united with a new grief. In his agitation he forgot that John Tremaine had a stain on his name, and extended his hand. Only when it was not taken, did he remember.

"She will live, sir," he said shortly. "I have telephoned to Richmond for the best man in the South. Your mother is here."

Malvern turned aside to conceal his emotion, and John waited. In a few moments the father asked him: "Now tell me, how did it happen?"

Tremaine had never stood before a more unpleasant task.

"We were riding at the foot of the property," said John, "and I insisted upon knowing why she never took a fence."

Tremaine saw the red color flush again in healthy anger Malvern's whitened cheeks.

"You did?" said the father. "What business was it of yours?"

Face to face with the results of his brutal taunting, quite conscious of his position in this man's eyes, Tremaine was too just to take offense. He bowed.

"None of my business," he said quietly, "and I feel myself entirely to blame. Miss Malvern thought I doubted her courage, and she is possessed of no small amount."

"She does not need your appreciation of it." Malvern could hardly use his voice.

"Before I could prevent her, she had taken the gate between the properties, where the ground is rotten with rabbit holes, and her mare fell with her."

Torn with anxiety, shocked, and unnerved, Malvern was not master of himself, and forgot that he was in his own house.

Before him stood a man whose moral weakness he despised; he was already beginning to think of him as a dangerous neighbor. He had watched his daughter dance with Tremaine with displeasure, and what Tremaine had told him now whipped his feeling to fury.

"I hardly know how to speak to you, Tremaine," he said with passion. "What you tell me is extraordinary. You speak of courage. In my youth, men were not bred to taunt women. My daughter had given me her word that she would not take a fence. Your taunt must have been a cruel one."

Tremaine's breath came hard. He did not speak. He knew that in the next moment the father would ask him to leave his house forever, and he could not blame him.

At that moment the door was opened

by Mrs. Tremaine. Her entrance upon the scene was the gentlest interruption that could have come. She still wore her hat and her furs. She came directly up to John and put her hand on his arm, but she spoke to Malvern, with tears in her eyes. Her face was beautiful and full of sweetness.

"Isobel is conscious, and she insists on seeing John, and the doctor says that we cannot refuse her."

There was a silence. Malvern's ruddy color faded as swiftly as it had mounted. Mrs. Tremaine looked from one to the other with a sinking heart.

Could it be possible, she thought, in this moment when a human life hung, perhaps, in the balance, that there could be an unpleasantness between her friend and her son?

In the voice of a general commanding an officer, Malvern fairly shouted at Tremaine: "Go, sir!" And then he said to Mrs. Tremaine: "We will pull her through, won't we, Molly? We will pull her through."

Mrs. Tremaine nodded, without speaking, and, taking her son's arm, led him with her from the room.

He asked his mother no questions on the way upstairs. He saw that she was agitated, struggling for self-control. He had himself the feeling that he was assisting at a sacrifice. His mother opened the door of a darkened room, and, before he knew it, he was standing by Isobel's bed.

They had bound her head, and she suggested a young boy—a young soldier, carried in from the battlefield. The country doctor stood opposite.

As he looked down at her face, less deadly pale than when he had carried her from the field, he saw that it would take death itself to stamp out that individual spark in her which was such a keen delight to him. There was on the finely chiseled lips the most touching spirit of a smile. She opened her eyes,

looked up at him, and he saw that she tried to move her hand.

"I can ride," he heard her say, and her voice was unchanged—a little weak, but the timbre was there. "It wasn't my fault the field was rotten. We jumped all right, didn't we?"

"You went over like a bird," he said quietly. "It could not have been cleaner."

It was touching to him to see the color, which in the human being answers each emotion, struggle to rise to her white cheeks. It was just the faintest illumination. He knew his praise had lit it.

"Promise me that you won't let daddy know that I did it to convince—you?"

The spirit of a smile left her lips. She grew as white as death; he saw her smooth young forehead contract and understood that the pain was more mental than physical. Still her eyes were on him, anxious, beautiful.

Tremaine smiled at her. The girl had been wondering for weeks just what that smile from John Tremaine would be. She had pictured it countless times; she saw it now; and as she saw it, she closed her eyes, and fainted away.

John felt the doctor put him aside gently, and take his place by Isobel. Mrs. Tremaine, also, bent over the girl, and John, after waiting a moment by the door, went out of the room alone.

He was deeply stirred. He stood for a minute in the hallway at the door. In those few moments this little girl had become to him that infinitely precious thing one woman may be to a man, and it seemed to him now that he had never loved any one else in his life. He thought to himself:

"Why, from the first moment that I saw her at those barriers, which she so authoritatively told me to take down for her, I have loved her."

He told himself that he had been

acknowledging this, against every admonition of common sense, for months.

On the last step of the stairs, the bare old hall fronting him, a terrible calmness came over him with the distinct realization that his love for Isobel Malvern was an impossibility; that he had no right to her.

As he came down the stairs slowly, Malvern waited for him at the foot, his hands on the newel post. His features worked and his right hand was partly raised, as if the gesture, fully expressed, would be an imprecation. Tremaine understood that Malvern would like to ask him to leave the house and never to cross the doorstep again.

John passed him quietly, took his hat from the stand, and put it on his head. He had a pair of gloves in his pocket, which he drew on. Then, fixing his clear eyes on Malvern, he said:

"The doctor from Richmond will be here in an hour. If Miss Malvern does not improve, you will send to New York for a specialist, of course?"

Malvern had come over to the front door, where John was standing. John turned the knob in his hand. Malvern's anger and emotion had almost completely unnerved him. The assurance and calm of this renegade, his air of mastery, his very presence in the house, were too much for Malvern's control.

"By God!" he began, then asked, in spite of himself: "Why did my daughter send for you, suh?"

"Miss Malvern," said Tremaine, "was very generous—as generous as she is brave."

Malvern lifted his hand to his mouth. He had not known that it could be possible to feel such dislike for any man. He breathed, nodding his gray head to John, and the word under his breath was almost indistinct:

"Coward!"

"And thief," John finished calmly. "That's what you want to say, isn't it?"

You are an older man than I, sir; you are in your own house."

The two men stood like this; then a light, the most illuminating that flushes the human face—that of gratitude and benevolence—suddenly broke over John Tremaine's.

"As I said to you at Riverside, Mr. Malvern, I owe you a great deal. With me memory is a very powerful thing. Most of us have no big memories."

He bowed, opened the door, shut it behind him, went quickly down the steps, up which he had carried Isobel, got on his horse, and rode away.

CHAPTER XXI.

Mrs. Tremaine remained at Malvern for a fortnight, and for three days John saw no one but his servants and Mammy Chloe.

His reputation as a successful farmer and as a brilliant business man had gone up and down the river. Everywhere he went he met deference and respect. But these autumn evenings, alone in the homestead, as he looked out on the soft color of the landscape, he realized more than ever how alone he was, how incomplete, and how he needed the woman.

On the fourth day after Isobel's accident, he came in to find Leavitt, who, coming from a political meeting, had been waiting for John in the library.

"Well," said the lawyer, taking John by the hand, "Chloe has been giving me a vivid description of Isobel's accident."

Tremaine answered coldly: "It wasn't serious; just a few bruises—no bones broken."

"I reckon Malvern found it serious enough," Leavitt said reproachfully. "His life is bound up in Isobel. Her mother——"

John dismissed the subject with these words:

"You must either let your daughters be sportswomen and take the conse-

quences, or you must keep them off horses altogether."

"I see your mother has found it necessary to remain at Malvern."

John smiled. "Her absence from home makes the accident serious. How everything turns round a woman, after all!"

He urged Leavitt to remain with him for luncheon. As the two men sat down and John drew the chicken before him to carve, he said:

"I miss my mother." And, looking up with a smile, he added: "I think you miss her, too."

Leavitt changed his subject by asking: "Isobel will not be crippled or disfigured?"

"Good heavens, no!" Tremaine cried with unnecessary reassurance. "A nigger's delight in describing a disease or an accident is artistic; don't listen to mammy's picturesque yarns. Miss Malvern will be on a horse in a month."

Leavitt wondered to himself: "Is there a tender streak in John anywhere?"

Tremaine said to Chloe, who stood with her hands on her hips, her bright old face beaming on her boy: "What do you mean by frightening Mr. Leavitt, mammy?"

"'Deed I didn' go fer to frighten him, Marse John. I's bin turrible frighten' maself, an' so has yo'."

Tremaine colored slightly. "Nonsense, mammy."

"When I dun see yo' mournin' here by the fire, Marse John, an' walkin' to an' fro like a ghost, a-browsin' roun' like a skelepon, I sho' dun reckon Missy Isobel was gwine ter die."

John saw Leavitt glance at him in surprise. In this moment, which had revealed something of himself, he charmed Leavitt and left him wondering.

The lawyer put down his knife and fork.

"Is there nothing that really touches you?"

"Yes," said the Virginian coolly; "the devotion of my Italian workmen."

Leavitt shrugged and regarded him calmly.

"There will be Italian citizens to vote for you at your reelection, John."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, your Italians will naturalize themselves and vote for Tremaine, of Virginia, when you present yourself for a second term in Congress."

"What do you mean?"

"This." The older man leaned forward and looked calmly at John through his highly polished glasses. "You may go to Congress if you like, at the next election."

Tremaine drank a glass of claret, wiped his lips deliberately, and then said: "You are hardly the sort of man to joke on a question like this, and I am surprised that you should say what you are saying to me."

"Why not, pray? Why should I not speak to you of these facts?"

"To taunt me," said Tremaine, and continued: "I am curious to know what you said when my name was mentioned?"

Leavitt addressed himself to his luncheon for a few moments without speaking, then answered: "It is not astonishing that you should have been remarked in a section of the country where important men are lacking. Your family has been prominent in affairs of the South," he went on solemnly. "It is time for a Tremaine to revive the traditions. You are accomplishing remarkable work with the land."

John interrupted him roughly:

"I think you are quite mad, Leavitt." His voice was so hard that the lawyer started in surprise. "No man but a lunatic would present himself for election with a past that would damn him at the polls. Even a man's foibles come out at election times, and, as for his

crimes"—he used the word clearly—"why, they break out like bad blotches, like evil diseases, and every ugly stain we hope to hide appears like a blot on a badly cleaned garment——"

"How unfeelingly he speaks of it!" the lawyer thought, but interrupted: "Your mother, Malvern, and I are the only ones who know your history."

John pushed back his plate, and lit a cigarette.

"My brother married. He doubtless told his wife. Once you've told a woman, go out in the street, and you will hear it cried from the housetops." After a second, apparently with more control, he asked in an ordinary tone of voice: "Do you think I would be justified in taking a political position?"

Leavitt flushed. "You are a Tremaine, and a little of the Tremaine leavens the whole lump."

"Then you believe me regenerated, Leavitt?"

"Yes," answered the lawyer eagerly. "I do."

Tremaine laughed aloud, rose from the table, and took a few steps to and fro; then, coming to the lawyer, he laid his hand on his shoulder.

"You are entirely mistaken, my dear friend." Over his dark face came a sarcastic humor which the lawyer could not appreciate. "As far as character and morals are concerned, the boy who ran away from Redlands sixteen years ago would blush for me."

Leavitt drew back a little. Tremaine patted his shoulder lightly.

"My dear man, I'm a searred old sinner beside that hot-hearted boy." And, as if he were looking back and watching the youthful John flying from home, the present Tremaine added in a low voice: "Poor little devil! Poor, sentimental, young fool!"

He left Leavitt and went to stand with his back to the empty hearth. Leavitt took a cigar from his waistcoat pocket, cut it deliberately, and lit it, and

Tremaine found a fresh cigarette, and began to smoke again. Watching the rings, he said:

"Knowing what the arena of public life is, and how old scandals are stirred, why do you suggest my presenting myself for Congress?"

"I wished to know the situation."

"You wanted me to accept?"

"I wanted to see what your reply would be."

Tremaine smoked a moment, and then said: "Well, I won't disappoint you. I refuse."

Without showing whether he felt satisfied or not, Leavitt nodded:

"I reckon you're right, John; I reckon it's the best thing."

Again Tremaine laughed without humor, crossed his arms, and threw up his head.

"God!" he exclaimed, in a low voice. "What a wretched little circle we turn round in!" Then, as if he were taking Leavitt into an intimate confidence, he added: "I want this nomination more than I have wanted anything in my life. Do you hear me, Leavitt? What you say is a temptation to me. You tell me no one knows my past. Why should I not take my chance?"

Leavitt was not surprised in the least. He said: "Because if it should so happen that they raked up the past, I think it would kill your mother."

Tremaine smoked. His expressive face darkened. After a few moments, he said somberly:

"For fifteen years she left me to wander as I would, without even trying to discover my whereabouts. I was an outcast whom no one tried to win back or to regenerate." He smiled, but less darkly. "All my mother asked of me was that I should keep my dishonor from her doors."

With the gentleness characteristic of him, Leavitt murmured: "You've already seemed to be planting these

quences, or you must keep them off horses altogether."

"I see your mother has found it necessary to remain at Malvern."

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"Why not, pray? Why should I not speak to you of these facts?"

"To taunt me," said Tremaine, and continued: "I am curious to know what you said when my name was mentioned?"

Leavitt addressed himself to his luncheon for a few moments without speaking, then answered: "It is not astonishing that you should have been remarked in a section of the country where important men are lacking. Your family has been prominent in affairs of the South," he went on solemnly. "It is time for a Tremaine to revive the traditions. You are accomplishing remarkable work with the land."

John interrupted him roughly:

"I think you are quite mad, Leavitt." His voice was so hard that the lawyer started in surprise. "No man but a lunatic would present himself for election with a past that would damn him at the polls. Even a man's foibles come out at election times, and, as for his

crimes"—he used the word clearly—"why, they break out like bad blotches, like evil diseases, and every ugly stain we hope to hide appears like a blot on a badly cleaned garment——"

"How unfeelingly he speaks of it!" the lawyer thought, but interrupted: "Your mother, Malvern, and I are the only ones who know your history."

John pushed back his plate, and lit a cigarette.

"My brother married. He doubtless told his wife. Once you've told a woman, go out in the street, and you will hear it cried from the housetops." After a second, apparently with more control, he asked in an ordinary tone of voice: "Do you think I would be justified in taking a political position?"

Leavitt flushed. "You are a Tremaine, and a little of the Tremaine leavens the whole lump."

"Then you believe me regenerated, Leavitt?"

"Yes," answered the lawyer eagerly. "I do."

Tremaine laughed aloud, rose from the table, and took a few steps to and fro; then, coming to the lawyer, he laid his hand on his shoulder.

"You are entirely mistaken, my dear friend." Over his dark face came a sarcastic humor which the lawyer could not appreciate. "As far as character and morals are concerned, the boy who ran away from Redlands sixteen years ago would blush for me."

Leavitt drew back a little. Tremaine patted his shoulder lightly.

"My dear man, I'm a scarred old sinner beside that hot-hearted boy." And, as if he were looking back and watching the youthful John flying from home, the present Tremaine added in a low voice: "Poor little devil! Poor, sentimental, young fool!"

He left Leavitt and went to stand with his back to the empty hearth. Leavitt took a cigar from his waistcoat pocket, cut it deliberately, and lit it, and

Tremaine found a fresh cigarette, and began to smoke again. Watching the rings, he said:

"Knowing what the arena of public life is, and how old scandals are stirred, why do you suggest my presenting myself for Congress?"

"I wished to know the situation."

"You wanted me to accept?"

"I wanted to see what your reply would be."

Tremaine smoked a moment, and then said: "Well, I won't disappoint you. I refuse."

Without showing whether he felt satisfied or not, Leavitt nodded:

"I reckon you're right, John; I reckon it's the best thing."

Again Tremaine laughed without humor, crossed his arms, and threw up his head.

"God!" he exclaimed, in a low voice. "What a wretched little circle we turn round in!" Then, as if he were taking Leavitt into an intimate confidence, he added: "I want this nomination more than I have wanted anything in my life. Do you hear me, Leavitt? What you say is a temptation to me. You tell me no one knows my past. Why should I not take my chance?"

Leavitt was not surprised in the least. He said: "Because if it should so happen that they raked up the past, I think it would kill your mother."

Tremaine smoked. His expressive face darkened. After a few moments, he said somberly:

"For fifteen years she left me to wander as I would, without even trying to discover my whereabouts. I was an outcast whom no one tried to win back or to regenerate." He smiled, but less darkly. "All my mother asked of me was that I should keep my dishonor from her doors."

With the gentleness characteristic of him, Leavitt murmured: "You've already seemed to be planting these

graves over with flowers. Forget that morbid past."

John shrugged impatiently, and, after a pause, exclaimed: "Then don't blame me if I do try to forget it! I want a subtle kind of justice, Leavitt. I am alive and vigorous, and I intend to live. Do you hear me? I am going to fight this scandal out right here and in my own way; do you understand? I am going to triumph over it, as I've triumphed over the land. I intend to run for Congress."

As he took this decision, his face cleared. He puffed his cigarette hard, and continued: "Now let them rake up all the filth they will. I'll stand by what they find out against me outside of Virginia."

Leavitt put the fingers of his hands together, made a little cage, and as if he had imprisoned his thoughts in it, looked through it pensively. If, he considered, Tremaine had been a weak young man in the past, he was a strong enough man now.

"John," he said slowly, "I will say to the committee whatever you wish. You are—as you say—fit. In a measure, your existence is your own, but it is linked with others—unfortunately, perhaps."

"By Heaven, unfortunately it is!" Tremaine murmured.

"Don't blaspheme," the lawyer said sternly. "And why should innocent creatures be called upon to suffer again at this late day because of your weakness in the past?"

It was with a certain solemnity that John Tremaine turned to him.

"It's sometimes impossible to avoid suffering for another's sake," he said. "Let others bear it; let the iron bite into them until it rusts their souls!"

Leavitt frowned. "You are savage," he said. "Your life led in countries of which we here know nothing, your homeless existence, have rendered you indifferent to those ties which should

make you tender to all the world. There is nothing so selfish as a man without a past, who has had no home and who admits no ties. He makes himself a unit when he should be part of the lives of many."

Tremaine looked at him calmly, looked at him and loved him. Leavitt, however, continued severe, watching John with his shrewd old eyes. Returning Leavitt's keen scrutiny with a look in which there was a kind of benevolence, Tremaine said:

"You're very interesting, my dear friend; but I know a lonely man without the ties you speak of, and he is one of the sweetest souls in the world."

Leavitt was not sufficiently naïve to be unconscious that John meant him.

"Never mind him," he said hurriedly. "You can't live to yourself alone here in Virginia. You've come right into the old home, John; you've come right up to the fireside." Leavitt's voice shook. "*You've come—and sat right down by her side.*"

Mrs. Tremaine's son threw his cigarette into the fireplace, leaned on the mantelshelf, and listened. He saw the devotion in the old man's heart to the one woman, and the fact that his love would sacrifice everything to bring a moment's peace to that one woman touched her son profoundly; there was a pathetic humor in it to him as he, the vigorous younger man, considered the old lawyer. But his own problem was too vital, too biting, to be put aside by Leavitt's sentimental plea.

"Do you mean to say," he asked shortly, "that my future is to be utterly damned because a boy stole ten thousand dollars from a bank in this God-forsaken little hole of a country? Especially since they had the grace to bury the dead and heap forgetfulness over it?"

Leaning toward Tremaine, the older man said impressively, almost hesitatingly: "John, I've watched you daily.

You've performed a miracle. Your character seems to have been remade, if I might say so. But don't you know what such a thing as theft means in the honorable life of a man?"

Turning abruptly from him, Tremaine murmured: "God!" He walked over to the window, threw it wide open, and leaned out. After a few seconds he turned back to the room, and, from where he stood, said to Leavitt, in a suffocated tone:

"How narrow a lawyer is, after all! What little visions of life a man gets who lives forever in one place! My dear man, take a long walk, and get away from Redlands. Study human nature a little, Leavitt." He laughed shortly. "Don't you know anything of mankind, sir?"

But Leavitt had again forgotten John's problems in his contemplation of the suffering he believed the mother had endured because of her youngest son. He could not admit the thought that this woman whom he worshiped was to be made to suffer again for this old fault. As if he had not heard the lawyer exclaimed:

"In those days, John—forgive me for saying it—I thanked God it was you who stole the money and not David."

Thrusting his hands into his pockets and biting his lip, John moved back toward Leavitt.

"You thanked God that David had not stolen the money?" he said, emphasizing every word.

"Yes," nodded the lawyer, wiping his glasses. "I've often done so. Your mother's heart is one that is made to worship, and her love is blind and absorbing. She worshiped David, and crime in him would have killed her."

The man before him drew a long breath. "Do you think you're telling me anything new?"

"Now she loves his young sons in the same way, John, and their careers are precious to her." Then, appealingly, as

if he were calling upon John to stand by, to support the family decayed and dependent on him, Leavitt added: "My dear boy, you would not be willing to rake up a past and uncover the stain to satisfy your own ambition. You would not make your mother weep afresh—you would not run the risk of blighting David's family; John?"

In a colorless voice, Tremaine repeated after him: "Blighting David's family—making my mother weep—"

Leavitt rose and put his hand on Tremaine's arm.

"It's your cross," he said affectionately. "God knows I believe it's a hard one. The time will come perhaps when you'll feel that this sacrifice has been worth while. Make it. Be glad you've got some one to make it for. By Heaven!" said the old lawyer, throwing up his head, "I'd give my life if there were any one to whom its sacrifice would mean anything!"

John neither looked at him nor heard him. His head was bent; his face was dark and gloomy; the old shadow, the old melancholy, had settled black upon him like dark angels that had waited their opportunity to possess deserted ground.

"Marse John," said Chloe from the doorway, "some o' dem 'Taliens is jabberin' hyar, an' de Lawd knows I cain't undahstan' a wor' dey means. Dey sho' talk de worst niggah language I ebber hyar."

She had come from washing the dishes, and twisted her blue apron in her hand, beaming on her foster son. His face softened as he looked upon her. He put out his hand to Leavitt.

"Some one seems to need me!" he said. "If you'll excuse me, I'll go to my work."

CHAPTER XXII.

He had plenty of time during the days that followed Isobel's illness and convalescence, to look into his heart.

His mother's absence made the house inexpressibly lonely. He kept out of it for the most part, only coming home for his meals, but the evenings were long.

He never went to Riverside to ask news of the girl whom his rude taunt had driven almost to her death. His mother telephoned him daily at a given time, and, no matter what his duties were, he arranged to be at home to take the message.

Once in Richmond he went into a florist's, and, tempted by the flowers, ordered a lavish box of them to be sent to Isobel. They went to her without his card.

He had plenty of occupation for his mind and thoughts. His experts had discovered one of the richest coal mines in the South. The stock was already above par and for sale in the New York market. As he thought to himself, walking through the streets of the Southern capital: "Everything I touch turns to gold."

He thrust away the image of Isobel, which persistently came to his mind, and when one day he opened a telegram to his mother from Julia Tremaine, its news gave him for a moment a peculiar satisfaction:

The boys and I are coming to spend Christmas at Riverside. If you cannot have us, let us know.

This visit, unsolicited, would be a peculiar break in his life. He could, of course, prevent it, but he did not want to do so. He found that he wanted to see David's sons, and he had a curiosity regarding Julia.

At the end of a fortnight, his mother came back to Riverside, and when he saw her busied about her familiar duties, he realized how much he had missed her, how charming the presence of a woman was in the house, and how lonely he had been.

Mrs. Tremaine flushed like a girl

when he bent and kissed her forehead. She did not return his caress. He wondered what the workings of her mind had been in the world of time during which she had been sick nurse—what she knew of the cause of the accident.

"Miss Malvern is quite herself again?" he asked.

"Quite. She thinks of nothing but riding as soon as possible."

"I understand that."

"You do? If I were her father, I should forbid her ever to ride again."

"You would make a coward of her."

"Mr. Malvern has been obliged to consent to her learning to ride cross-country."

"Plucky little girl!"

The exclamation was not out of his mouth before he regretted it, but Mrs. Tremaine ignored it. She was putting little touches to the room, which had become disarranged in her absence.

"Her father is going to take her to Hot Springs for six weeks."

John felt at once a great disappointment and a great relief. This would enormously simplify matters. Six weeks would bring them almost to Christmas time, when the Northern Tremaines should arrive.

From his mother's attitude, and the fact that she said nothing, he believed that Malvern had not pained her by telling her that John was the cause of Isobel's accident.

Mrs. Tremaine touched a letter that lay on the table at her hand. John had not observed it before.

"I brought this," she said succinctly, and, although she did not leave the room, she went over to the window and sat there with her sewing. In picking up the envelope addressed in a strange handwriting, John experienced what every man in love feels when he first sees his name written by the woman's hand. The writing was frank, simple; it might have been a boy's calligraphy,

round and clear. He opened the letter. It had no beginning.

A box of wonderful flowers came to me from Richmond the other day. There was no card with them. I have no right to suppose that they were from you; yet, for some reason or other, I think that they are.

Many people have sent me flowers from Richmond. I have even had some from New York. But these I liked the best of all. If you ask your mother, she will tell you the last ones have only just faded.

If you didn't send them to me, please don't tell me so. I would rather not know.

Tim tells me that Wild Cat is dead. I couldn't ask until to-day, because I didn't want to know. Poor, beautiful, little creature, I am so awfully sorry! It doesn't seem right—does it?—that a girl's recklessness and a man's rudeness should be the cause of an innocent creature's death. Aren't you awfully sorry? Won't you ride over and tell me so? I am quite well enough to see you. Sincerely,
ISOBEL MALVERN.

Tremaine read the letter, folded it up, and put it into his pocket. There was no reason in her eyes why he should not come. Even the most casual neighbor would have been polite enough to call several times to ask news of her.

By one rudeness after another, by continued churlishness, he would doubtless arrive at the point of making her understand.

Making her understand what? Making a charming woman understand that he thought she was in love with him; that he on his part was indifferent to her, and intended taking the most uncivilized means to disenchant her?

As these reflections passed through his mind, he said quietly to himself, touching the letter against his breast: "And I love her."

Leavitt came into the room. John saw him go over to Mrs. Tremaine, lift her hand, and kiss it.

"Back, Molly? It has been a long while," he said in an undertone, and John saw them look at each other.

Unlike himself, Leavitt had no reason to keep from Malvern House, and he had been a faithful visitor.

"We have been mighty lonely, John and I," said the lawyer. "Riverside was like an oyster shell with the pearl gone, wasn't it, John?"

John watched them.

The peculiar delicacy of his mother's skin—fine and fair as a young girl's—made all her emotions evident by the gentle rising of the color to her cheeks. She blushed when her admirer touched her hand; she smiled on him more kindly than John had ever seen her smile. The romance of it touched him. From where he stood, he said brusquely:

"A chap who spends a part of his day directing a lot of dirty Hungarians and keeping peace between niggers and Italians doesn't have time to think much about women, Leavitt. I leave romance to others."

There was no reason why at this moment he should have offended these gentle people. He did so ruthlessly, turning without further remark and leaving the room where they stood together.

CHAPTER XXIII.

He saw Isobel Malvern once before she went away. Coming suddenly into Leavitt's office, toward the end of the week, he found himself in the room with her, for she was sitting before Leavitt's desk in the revolving chair. She had ridden over.

To Isobel the shock was great. When the cruel red that stained her cheeks had died and she had grown quite pale, John saw, running down her forehead, just above her cheek, a bright little scar. He also saw they had cut off her beautiful hair, which was short like a boy's under her riding hat.

Without the formality of any greeting, he asked quickly: "Are you riding again so soon?"

Isobel's whip was on the table. Her brown skirt was short above her russet boots.

"Why, of course. It was the only thing to do; otherwise I might have been afraid for ever. Don't you think I was quite right?"

He had never seen anything so blue as her eyes, nor had he ever seen anything so frank as her beautiful look.

Isobel's feelings were clear as crystal. She was unaccustomed to concealment. She had a fine scorn of any ruse, and in the case of this first love, had not been, from the very beginning, entirely mistress over the tumult of feelings that Tremaine had roused in her.

He referred neither to her illness nor to the accident.

"I came to see Leavitt on a matter of business, but my business can wait for yours. It must be very serious to bring you to a lawyer's office."

Seeing on the man's face no softening, failing to meet the response she longed to see, the girl said to herself, with a sinking of her heart:

"Oh, he is harsher, colder than ever! It means nothing to him to see me. In a moment Mr. Leavitt will come in. To-morrow we shall be gone from Riverside. Why did he look at me as he did when I was hurt?"

Aloud she said: "I understand that you are the busiest man in Virginia. I suppose you are making your election campaign."

"I am not taking the nomination," he answered shortly, and she exclaimed with interest: "Not taking the nomination! But you're not serious?"

"Quite. I am not a politician; I'm a farmer and a mine superintendent."

She went on more naturally, the impersonal conversation helping her to gather herself together.

"Nonsense!" she laughed. "You don't suggest a farmer, or a miner, either, for that matter."

She smiled, leaning forward to him.

"Do you know, I really don't believe that you are anything you say you are."

In her half-laughing words there was something that caught Tremaine's ear. He looked at her sharply.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Why," returned Isobel Malvern, "I mean that you always seem to me—I don't quite know how to put it—not exactly acting a part—you are too real for that—but keeping *back* something." She hesitated. "You see, when I met you first, you were dressed like a field hand, and you weren't that!"

He laughed harshly.

"It's just what I'm telling you I am."

"No," she said thoughtfully, "no; what shall I say?"

"Say it!" he commanded.

"It's vague; it's not fully expressed; it's just a feeling."

John had seated himself on the table near her and had picked up her riding whip. He was in love with her and could not tell her so. Every word she said interested him deeply. She was now showing him something of the working of her mind.

"When you saw me first," he said grudgingly, as if he were forcing himself to talk with her against his will, "I was a field hand and I deceived you."

Isobel smiled. "And the second time, too, you were a field hand."

"And I deceived you."

"And the third time you were a field hand."

"And you only found me out because I carried a fine piece of linen for a handkerchief."

"No," she said slowly, "that's not quite so."

"But you didn't guess?"

Once again his eyes were on her with a cruel intentness for a man who did not love her. He saw the beating blood in her cheeks.

Tremaine understood women and knew his power here; knew that he had only to put out his hand, so idly playing with her whip, to take hers, to encircle her lovely chin and lift her lips

to his. He knew, too, that she was struggling not to say to him all she wanted to say. The domination in him—aside from his love—tempted him, but he was also hungry to hear her speak.

"No," she said slowly, in a low voice; "I did not see that you were John Tremaine."

She stopped.

"Well," he urged, "well, then, I *did* deceive!"

"But I saw," she went on, "something that perhaps even you would think it rather subtle in me to see."

"How do you mean?"

"I saw that if you were a field laborer, you were quite different from any field laborer I had ever heard of. I felt it the first time, and more strongly the second."

Was the rôle that he was playing actually forcing this young girl out of her rôle? Was she making love to him? It had its charm. She drew off her heavy white riding gloves, setting free her delicate hands. They were fine, but strong and capable, well modeled. He had seen jewels in Africa, from his own mines, that he would like to put upon her fingers. She wore no rings, but she could wear them well.

"And between the second time and the third time," he pursued, "you did me the honor to analyze my personality."

His tone might have hurt her, but she was not going to allow herself to be hurt by him. It would take a great deal of cruelty to obliterate from her mind John's face as he had bent toward her when she was injured, and the memory of his look.

"Yes," she said frankly, "I thought about you, if you call it analysis. If you had been a field hand, I shouldn't have thought about you, and so you see, after all"—her voice was peculiarly sweet—"I really, in a way, knew you, didn't I?"

"By Jove!" exclaimed Tremaine. "It is rather subtle, isn't it?"

She sat back, composed herself. Their interview was being prolonged beyond her wildest hope.

"Not really subtle," said Isobel. "It's quite simple and brings me to what I said a few moments ago—that I think perhaps I really know you better than you do yourself."

The conversation had charm. The delight in what she said made the situation dangerous for him; if he did not break the spell, he would there and then tell her that he loved her.

"You mean to say, then, that you think I am a born politician, and not a farmer or a miner?" he said practically.

His tone, the unmoved expression of his face, hurt her.

"You have great powers," she said quietly, "and I am sure that you could go as high as you like. Virginia needs just such a man as you to represent her." She continued: "There have been big Tremaines in history. It seems rather a shame you should give to Africa and to England what you are not willing to give to us."

She did not dream how she goaded him. It was hard enough to be obliged from a sense of honor to relinquish all he was relinquishing, without the knowledge that in so doing he was disappointing her.

"My brother, Judge Tremaine," he said, "carried the Tremaine banner very high. He remained in his own country and made the name famous in New York State."

Isobel laughed.

He was surprised and asked: "What makes you take it in that way?"

"Oh," she said, "the idea of Judge Tremaine carrying a banner. But I forget that you had not seen your brother for fifteen years."

"Did you know him?"

"Oh, yes."

"Well," said Tremaine, "he does not

seem to have charmed you as he did most people."

"Since you did not know him," said Isobel, "and he really was nothing to you, from what mammy says, you won't mind my saying that I couldn't endure him. He was pompous and selfish."

She was looking at him as she spoke, and, if her words until now had aroused no response, this appreciation of his brother did so. John's face lightened wonderfully, and something of the old smile touched it.

"Really!" he exclaimed, scarcely knowing what he said. "You knew him well enough to think all that, did you?"

They both laughed. From the office next, came the little tinkle of Leavitt's bell. He had been there all the time, and had purposely left them alone. Isobel rose.

"I am going," she said. "Instead of talking to Mr. Leavitt, I've talked to you, and I must be riding home." She extended her hand; John took it. "You see, it's my first ride, and I am not too awfully fit yet." Then, looking him full in the eyes with her frank, fine glance, she asked: "*Won't* you take the nomination?"

He was not all iron, and if, as she had said, he wore a mask, she had lifted it. He took her hand, as if he were about to touch it with his lips, but he did not do so.

"Thank you for caring," he said simply; "I mean, for caring about Virginia. You told me how you love the State—didn't you?—that day we walked along the river, and you knew me by my handkerchief."

She said, in a tone so low that he could hardly hear it: "Not by your handkerchief; by your eyes."

"You still wear the locket? Well, you must love Virginia enough to want the best men to represent her."

"I do; that's why I want you to go to Congress."

He let her hand fall. She saw his

face darken. He took her riding whip, gave it to her, handed her her gloves, and walked over to the door, which he opened.

"I am not worth thinking about," he said, almost roughly; "and I am *not* the man to represent Virginia. Ask your father; he will tell you so."

Then he broke off abruptly, and this time she did not mind the roughness in his voice, for he gave her what every woman loves to receive from one man in particular—a command.

"Ride home quietly and when you get back, rest. And be careful, when you take fences, that there are no rabbit holes on the other side."

CHAPTER XXIV.

John finally persuaded his mother to take part in the worldly life of Richmond, and one evening whirled her off in the motor to a dinner at the house of Silas Brandegee, president, then, of the Iron and Coal Company.

Brandegee made much of the fact that Mrs. Tremaine had consented to be his guest. They toasted her, and John was proud of his mother in her black velvet dress. Although she had always refused to accept jewels from him, she now wore in her ears two pearls of which she had taken pains not to know the value.

Brandegee knew nothing of the coldness existing between the Malverns and the Tremaines, and sent Mrs. Tremaine in on her neighbor's arm. John took in his hostess. Isobel sat opposite him. The out-of-door life at the hot springs of Virginia had completely restored her to health. But what use to wear one's most becoming dress and to look lovely if the one man in the world never looks at you? Mrs. Brandegee was young and charming, and John devoted himself to her.

It was not the custom of the Brandegees to separate after dinner, and the

men and women gathered together in the great hall. Brandegee stood before the fire, his hands under the tail of his coat, and harangued Tremaine.

"Why don't you run for Congress, Tremaine?" he asked directly, and followed: "I am beginning to think that you are a quitter—a shaker of responsibilities. You refuse to take a hand in anything that means a personal effort on your part. It's not fair. You have come back after an absence of fifteen years, and in an incredibly short time you have made every one talk of you. Now, I have lived here all my life, and no one has asked me to run for mayor."

"Because of your rigid aversion to politics."

"How do you know that?" asked Brandegee quickly.

"Every one knows the reputation and opinions of the biggest man south of Washington."

Brandegee smiled, pleased.

"If half of what you say is true, my opinion will have weight with you. You must run for Congress."

Mrs. Tremaine, who was sitting by Isobel on the divan, leaned forward, looking at her son.

John replied curtly: "In this case your opinion will not affect me."

His tone was so short that Brandegee shrugged. Tremaine was living up to his reputation for rudeness. Brandegee, however, continued courteously:

"I can only present the view of a Virginian who represents in a measure his community. We need you. I loved your father. There was no one like him in the district. I want to see Virginia make her mark in Congress. You are the man for us."

Mrs. Tremaine's cheeks grew hot; her eyes fell.

"What makes you think I am the man, Brandegee?"

Emphasizing his words with his eyeglasses as he spoke, Brandegee announced methodically:

"You have won the confidence of every one in the county; you are a rich man; you have a stainless reputation; you are your father's son, your mother's son— Why, it doesn't seem to need explanation."

John Tremaine's eyes met his mother's and held hers prisoner. He seemed to say to her: "Now you see the opinion of me that others hold. What do you think about me now?" He knew that she was suffering, but he did not know that she was suffering more for him than for herself. Then, very quietly, he turned his gaze to his neighbor, Malvern, who, seated in a comfortable leather chair with his legs crossed, was smoking, his face hard and set, looking into the fire. Malvern was especially regretting that his daughter was present to hear these eulogies of John Tremaine.

"Don't you take an interest in politics?" Mrs. Brandegee asked sweetly.

And John replied: "An enormous interest. I believe it the one field for a disinterested American who can forego personal gain and overcome his prejudices."

"Well, now we are beginning to understand each other!" Brandegee exclaimed delightedly. "My dear fellow, we are quite of the same mind. I am willing to pledge a good sum of money for the campaign."

Mrs. Tremaine moved uneasily. To her the word "money" meant just one thing—the bank scandal in the past. She heard John say: "I could handle my campaign without much expenditure, but I shall not accept the nomination."

Brandegee turned to Mrs. Tremaine. "Come, my dear friend," he urged, "you must persuade John. Don't you want to see a Tremaine in the House?"

Mrs. Tremaine was not a Virginian for nothing. Though her lovely face was quite colorless, she controlled her emotion. She saw in this moment what

her younger son might have been if there had not existed this scandal, and she understood now all that he was debarred from. It was a cruel moment for the proud woman, and she was blaming her son bitterly. Before she could speak, Brandegee continued:

"We are not old Romans. Tell your son that he must not tie himself down to a farm. We come to him as the voice of the people. We need him. Speak to him, Mrs. Tremaine."

An expression of pity and at the same time of serenity crossed John's face. From his chair, behind his cigar smoke, Malvern spoke. His voice was rasping.

"Come, Brandegee," he said, a little irritated. "Why should you seek to turn a man from his chosen career? If Tremaine chooses farming and mining as his business, why urge him into politics?"

John's eyes did not turn themselves in the direction of his neighbor. He was looking at his mother.

"I urge Tremaine," said Mr. Brandegee, "because, though I am not active politically, I am not devoid of public spirit, and I want to see this State fitly represented. It is no new thing to find a man lost in his own State. Tremaine has been a big man in Africa; he must be a big man here."

Brandegee was now conscious that Mrs. Tremaine had not spoken. He bowed to her politely, and said:

"Give me your aid, my dear lady. Tell John what it is his duty to do."

Even the attitude of her quiet son seemed to say to her that he was waiting. As she spoke, only Isobel, who sat beside her, heard the tremor in her voice.

"I think John is quite right," she said. "He has his mines and the property. They are very absorbing."

It was a weak reply. Even Brandegee felt it. Leavitt, whose sole preoccupation during the conversation had been

for Mrs. Tremaine, now broke in gently:

"I reckon you will have to take the nomination yourself, Brandegee, and if you decide to accept it, that will absorb you."

Brandegee threw out his hands with a gesture of despair.

"It is a great loss," he said; "a very decided mistake."

"You see," said Tremaine calmly, "I am returning to South Africa before very long. I am not even planning to cast my fortunes with Virginia."

Brandegee broke into protestations, going up and putting his hand on John's arm. Malvern looked at his daughter. As he feared would be the case, her eyes were fastened on John. He had thought, when he had brought her to Richmond that night, that she was looking wonderfully well and gay. So, indeed, she had been, with the prospect before her of seeing John again after six weeks. Now she was as lifeless and as pale as a candle from which the flame has been struck. She sat in the corner of the sofa, her hands clasped in her lap, and, after a second, she looked down at them meditatively, with an expression too absorbed for a young girl's face to wear. Her attitude and expression exasperated her father and intensified his dislike of the man who stood before the fireplace with his host.

The other men had joined the group. He could hear them speak of Tremaine's action in Denver regarding the Sixth National Bank. Some one began to ask him about the Reekie diamond mines; and Malvern, once president of the biggest bank in the district outside of Richmond, once a man of affairs and importance, now poor, involved, sat apart, while his clerk, with a dishonorable record behind him, monopolized the principal people of the town. If Brandegee knew what he knew; if the other men knew, if his daughter knew—that John Tremaine was a thief!

He crossed the room to where Isobel was sitting, and when he suggested their leaving because she looked tired, she went with him without demur.

After John and his mother had motored back to Riverside, they stood together in the living room before parting for the night. John's silence all the way out had been unbroken, and his mother, as well, had been glad to retire into her own thoughts; but, as she saw him standing there, his eyes fixed upon the hearth, she went up to him and touched his arm.

"Lift up your eyes, John."

He said, with an effort: "My eyes are always on the ground. It has made my fortune, and it is my life."

"You would have liked this election, would you not? I think you would have won."

"Yes, I should have liked it."

She daily grew more maternal to him. Now she longed to comfort him, but with the tender sentiment she felt for him there was blame as well. To her surprise, he lifted his head and said abruptly, as if the question were forced out of him:

"You really think that it is impossible?"

It was hard for her to blight him with the answer she felt in duty bound to make. She murmured:

"Of course, as Mr. Brandegee talked, it all seemed so simple; nothing might be said. Mr. Malvern will never break his word. It may now be only a question of conscience, and yet at any moment— These things are never really hidden—"

Her face was so troubled that John forgot himself, and said mercifully:

"Don't think about it any more. It has no importance. I made my decision long ago, and when one once makes a decision, the rest is comparatively easy. It is, after all, only taking the stand."

As he said these words, the dark shadow lifted from his face, and, with

what in him was extreme gentleness, he lifted her hand and held it between his.

"Of course, you are quite right. A man with a crime on his record must give up distinctions and honors. Take it all together, I am very fortunate." And he surprised her by reverting to his past. "If you could hear them in Reekie, mother, you would see what they thought about me there." He laughed. "Do you know, I think that a chap would fare very hardly in Reekie who tried to throw any mud at me." He shrugged. "What does anything matter, really, except what you've got here?" He touched his breast. "If that is empty, why, the rest is nothing at all."

Mrs. Tremaine's lips trembled. For a moment she covered her eyes with her hand.

"It is cruelly hard!" she murmured, "cruelly hard!" Then she faced him again. The look on his face now was so bright, so illuminated, that his mother was almost dazzled by its sweetness.

"There are harder things," he said slowly. "Believe me, the chief annoyance is that it makes you suffer. Now you must not let it." He spoke commandingly. "Put it aside. Take it altogether, don't you think things have turned out pretty well for the rene-gade?" He was smiling. "Remember, it's very long ago, and all those years you had David to comfort you."

John almost never mentioned his brother's name voluntarily to his mother. He had seen the emotion the slightest reference to David caused her.

"It would have been harder for you," he said measuredly, "if it had been David."

She drew back from him, smothered a cry, and he heard her breathe: "Oh, incredible!"

He nodded. "Perfectly incredible. So you see it might have been worse. Now go to bed, mother, and forget about everything excepting the fact that

there are strawberries growing in the greenhouses, and that you can make strawberry shortcake for us to-morrow. And don't cry," he added, dropping her hand. "The loss of a seat in Congress isn't worth one tear."

CHAPTER XXV.

Mrs. Tremaine took the renunciation less peacefully than did her son.

From the moment that John brushed away the idea of political success, he absorbed himself more deeply in his superintendence of the mines. He had enough to occupy him there. There were constant troubles between the Italians, the Hungarians, and the negroes; but he ruled the situation with a rod of iron, was his own paymaster for the property and the mines, exerted a powerful influence over his men, and was at once feared and respected.

One day his mother asked him, with perceptible hesitation, if it would cost him too much pain if she spoke to him about his brother's affairs.

"On the contrary, it would interest me very much indeed."

She had confided to Leavitt that Julia had written her a very disturbing letter. David, in the latter years of his life, had been unfortunate in his investments, and now that the estate was settled up, Julia and her children found their affairs very much involved. Mrs. Tremaine had been brooding on these things, not daring to approach John.

This evening, as they sat together in the glow of the cedarwood fire, she spoke, and he said shortly:

"I saw there was something on your mind. Tell me about it."

The power of his voice, the ring of command in it, struck her, and she thought then that it would be difficult to disobey him. She fortified herself with the knowledge that John owed everything to his elder brother, but it was a delicate situation.

"It is hard to talk to you," she said.

"Why?"

"Because I know you less than I know any one in the world, John, even though you are my son."

"You are wrong there," he returned. "If you would let yourself believe that I am just as I am—as you see me—you would find that you knew me well enough to speak about David's estate. I suppose there is not much left of it."

"Why should you think that?" she asked, astonished.

"Because," he said, rather bitterly, "there is nothing in the world that could worry you now excepting something in connection with David."

Mrs. Tremaine outlined to him the state of affairs briefly; and, with his hands linked between his knees, leaning over and staring into the fire, he listened to the story of his brother's financial affairs. When she had finished, he said coldly:

"Let Julia ask me to help her."

"Oh, how can you suggest such humiliation!" his mother exclaimed.

And he blurted out, turning to Mrs. Tremaine a face not crimsoned by the firelight alone:

"Why, in God's name, should I not?"

It flashed across his mother's mind that he had forgotten his brother's generosity, and she said sternly:

"I must remind you, then, of what your brother did for you when you ran away?"

John threw back his head and laughed.

"Oh, it's that, is it?" he exclaimed.

"You mean that the time has come for me to repay David's self-sacrifice and his generosity by supporting his wife and family?"

The words were hardly out of his mouth before the pained expression of her face, the real anguish there, brought him to himself. He waited a moment before speaking, and then said lightly:

"Don't look so distressed, mother. The only importance that it possesses is that it causes you annoyance."

"Oh," she breathed, "you think it of no importance that a widow and two children should be left in financial embarrassment?"

"A little anxiety will do Julia good," said Tremaine cruelly. "Anxiety does most of us good."

In the silence that fell he realized that he was losing ground with his mother, to whom he had come so near. In her eyes, he was unkind and ungenerous, and then, goaded beyond endurance, he turned, almost fiercely, and said in a low tone:

"And what about *me* during the years I fought my way alone in strange countries, trying to keep my head above the current, without home, or wife, or children? Did I cause you sleepless nights then? Who stood near me in times of financial disaster?"

But Mrs. Tremaine, before whose eyes had now arisen the image of her beloved son, drew back from this one and murmured, while tears sprang to her eyes:

"I have hurt you, John. I am sorry."

"Please don't weep," he said. "Tell Julia to come down here with the boys. Send her a wire to-day."

CHAPTER XXVI.

The friendship between Leavitt and John Tremaine had deepened. Leavitt had a faculty of seeing in other people what he was himself. As all his qualities were admirable, the gentle Southerner was apt to people the world with admirable human beings. It was impossible for him not to respond to John's charm. He was as well the son of the woman whom Leavitt adored.

Ever since John's brusque entrance into his office eighteen months before, John had steadily contradicted every known hypothesis regarding dishonest

men, renegades, and fellows who broke their mothers' hearts. Leavitt saw him even more intimately than did John's mother. But it was John who sought the older man; and Leavitt who, with the exception of Mrs. Tremaine, had no close friend in the district, found himself becoming more and more dependent on the mind and companionship of Tremaine.

Leavitt's opinion was that John was one of those people who are supposed to be possessed of strong tendencies for either good or evil, and he decided that the crime had been committed in a moment of great temptation, and that the man, really a noble fellow at heart, had spent his life in trying to eradicate that blot and so to cover it over with good that it should be eternally wiped out. He was sure, too, that other moments of temptation had come and that John had been strong enough to combat them all.

In their intercourse, Leavitt had grown to know something of those fifteen years of exile, but Tremaine gave his confidence grudgingly, and it was not easy to make him talk of himself.

Leavitt's house on the James stood back a little from the river. Two hundred years had mellowed the wood in which holes from Federal bullets had left their historic scars. From the windows of his library he could look out upon the river, and across it, through the oaks, he could see the roofs of Riverside. His little homestead was ideal to him. It was a sort of observatory from which he watched a star. There was, to the man who had hopelessly loved all his life, a great consolation in being so near to the woman he adored. Separated from her by the red banks and the river, a few acres of field and lawn, he nevertheless felt that they lived their lives alongside of one another.

He was sitting with a book before the log fire in his little study, toward

five o'clock one afternoon, when his black servant announced:

"Mistah John, Marse Sam."

Leavitt sprang up, pushed his chair—the most comfortable one in the room—toward the fire, wrung John's hand, forced him to take the chair, and drew up the little table upon which Pompey always arranged the cigars his master loved, a few cigarettes, and a brierwood pipe with a silver band.

"John," he said, "I am perfectly delighted, my dear fellow. I was just about to walk over to Riverside myself."

Leavitt wore a colored waistcoat—rather a gay relic of his gayer days—a black velvet smoking jacket, a pair of gray trousers, and a bright red cravat. Above his collar his keen, well-bred face was as fresh in color as a young man's. Tender-hearted, impulsive, made of the worst stuff in the world for a business success, he was made of the best stuff in the world for sentiment and for friendship.

"Pompey," he said, "fetch something for Mr. John to drink. You know what he likes."

The peculiarity, on this evening, of Leavitt's hospitality was that there was a shade less warmth in his greeting because John's visit just at this hour would prevent his making his daily call on Mrs. Tremaine.

"Leavitt," said John, "I came at this time because my mother has an unexpected visitor. I left her with Malvern. He has not been to the house in many months, and I knew that I should find you if I came at once."

The knowledge that he would not have seen Mrs. Tremaine alone consoled her admirer.

"I want to talk to you on a very delicate matter, Leavitt." And Leavitt, who had been for several weeks longing to talk to John on a very delicate matter, but not daring to do so, wondered if it

were the same. "You are the Malverns' lawyer, aren't you?" John asked.

Leavitt bowed his head, and his face took the important expression that it assumed whenever he strayed into the world of business. His excursions there were rare these days. He had almost no clients; if possible, fewer than ever. He continued to be a delightful failure. John, looking at him, smiled.

"You wouldn't let me make you rich, would you, Leavitt?"

"Money," said Leavitt, "is the poorest thing in the world, my dear fellow."

"So much so," said Tremaine, "that one should ignore it sufficiently to be willing to accept its advantages and the unmistakable power it gives. The very way in which some proud, poor people despise it and attach undue importance to it gives it a reality that in the case of a busy, useful, rich man it loses entirely."

Leavitt returned his smile.

"You are a useful, rich man, John," he said. "There's no doubt about that. Your worst enemy could not deny you that."

"You could be the same if you wished to be, Leavitt."

Leavitt shook his head.

"I have a groove," he said. "In a measure, it expresses me. I am too old to change. I should not look well out of my niche. But you spoke of Malvern."

"Yes," said Tremaine. "I came here to talk of him with you, Leavitt, as I can speak of him to no one else."

Leavitt gave him his most professional attention.

"He has been uncharitable to you, my dear fellow. He is one of those unflinching judges."

"I was not thinking about his personal relations with me," said Tremaine; "nor do I ever blame one man for his attitude toward another. Our attitude toward others is something for

the most part beyond our control. It is a question of personal relationship—the most subtle, and one of the most powerful things in the world.”

Leavitt listened to him. To this peaceful gentleman who had never traveled farther than New York, and who could, indeed, count the times that he had been even as far as that, John represented the world, and Leavitt had grown to give him an attention which, because of its very interest, had a certain respect.

“I used to think,” said John, “that it was impossible for one person to be drawn to another without a kindred response, though circumstances might prevent any exhibition or revelation of the dual attraction. I don’t think that now.” He looked at Leavitt. “I love certain things in Malvern; we could have been great friends. I have referred half a dozen times to his kindness to me when I was a young chap. I used to watch him in the bank and admire him profoundly. I admire him now. He bears his fallen fortunes like a thoroughbred. Now,” he continued, flicking the ash from his cigar, “something must be done.”

“How do you mean?” asked Leavitt.

“Something must be intelligently combined so that Malvern’s finances can be put into shape.”

Leavitt shook his head, smiling.

“I am afraid you cannot play the part of a magician in this case, John. If he had been a younger man—if it had not been for the question of your mother—Redmond might have insulted you when you made your first proposition regarding the iron company.”

“He could not insult me, Leavitt,” John said, looking into the fire. “Nothing that he could say would offend me. I know his sense of honor. In his eyes I have offended unpardonably. He is in a position to make me feel my disgrace. He has his reasons; I don’t blame him. In his place I should feel

exactly as he does. Now let us look at the business proposition.”

Leavitt got out his eyeglasses, cleaned them on his silk handkerchief, and looked penetratingly at his companion. “John is doing this for the girl,” he thought to himself; and the question having thus turned from business to sentiment, it interested him more than ever.

“I want you to help me to carry out a plan for buying his land. He must never know—he need never know—indeed, it would be fatal should he suspect.”

“He would not think twice of drawing a gun on both of us!” Leavitt said, rather excitedly.

“Again I should not blame him,” said Tremaine.

Pompey came in with a tray of drinks, which he put down by John’s side.

“Fill your glass, John,” said the lawyer; and Pompey filled one for his master, standing beaming on the two gentlemen.

“Taste good, Marse John?” he asked anxiously.

“Perfect, Pompey.” And Pompey went away, satisfied.

The two friends lifted their glasses, and John said:

“Here’s to Redmond Malvern!”

They drank solemnly. When they had put down their glasses, John said:

“You know something of the lay of the Malvern property, Leavitt?”

“Something,” said Leavitt. “There was a question of a sale five or six years ago, and I went over the original deeds with Redmond. There’s a long stretch of worthless swamp land—some five hundred acres of it—lying along the river, as you know. Then there’s a stretch of mountain country—no good for any purpose.”

John said: “Now, all this property lies close to the Blythe Mountain coal district.” He smiled at Leavitt. “Would

it surprise you very much, my dear fellow, if I told you that it was rich in coal?"

"It would surprise me very much, John," Leavitt said peacefully, without excitement. "And I think it would you!"

"Not so much as you think. There's a rumor in Richmond to that effect."

Leavitt smiled. "If there is," he said, "you've started it. I know for a certain fact that the whole district has been expertized since your booming of Blythe Mountain."

John nodded. "There is, nevertheless, such a rumor, Leavitt—a rumor that will grow—a rumor that will obtain credence, that will not be denied—a rumor that will be listened to with interest by the Blythe Mountain Coal and Iron Company. But before any other purchaser steps in, there will be a man here to-morrow from Washington to see you, who will offer you three hundred and fifty thousand for the Malvern land I speak of, skirting the estate; and you will not be so big a fool as to refuse it for your client."

Leavitt's pipe had gone out. He was watching his vis-à-vis keenly. He knocked the ashes out upon the hearth, and filled his pipe again methodically, with the attention of an affectionate smoker. When he had lit it and puffed at it several times, he said emphatically:

"You'll have to count me out of your scheme."

"Why?"

"Well," said Leavitt slowly, "I couldn't act up to it, my dear boy. I

won't say I don't approve of it. If you are rich enough to juggle with men's fates, it's your own affair. But you mustn't expect me to aid you in this, John."

"I am disappointed," said Tremaine.

"Oh, no," said Leavitt gently, smoking, but smiling at him. "I never ran away from home, John. I never made a fortune and came back the big man of the place. I am an obscure, unsuccessful lawyer. There's nothing romantic about me!"

"You are one of the most romantic figures I ever knew," said John.

Leavitt shook his head. "Count me out. I couldn't play the part. I should spoil it."

"You can't help yourself," remarked John calmly. "You are bound to help me in this. And, Leavitt, you will give me your word of honor that our conversation remains a secret, and that no one—above all, my mother—knows of my connection with this affair."

"Oh, I promise that," said Leavitt.

John threw the remains of his cigar into the fireplace, pushed the dark hair back from his forehead, and held out his hand.

"Good night, my dear fellow," he said; "unless you think it is not too late to come back with me to Riverside? Malvern will be gone by this."

He dropped his friend's hand, and, under the gaze of the old lawyer, his eyes grew sober.

"John——" said Leavitt slowly, and then hesitated. "John, you are mighty fond of the little girl, aren't you?"

TO BE CONTINUED.





CONCE, some one wrote a lovely poem about an earthworm loving a star.

Those things are not written nowadays. We have compiled too great a knowledge about the star, whereas the earthworm quite eludes us. And again, if we invest space with emotion nowadays, we call it cosmic, while there be they who maintain that the cosmos is sans love.

Believe them not. Love remains, transcending the cosmos. And yet we are all for demonstration in this age, and we believe most in that which has most been proved.

There lived a certain singer, beautiful and young. She spoke much of her love for her art, and then—her love was tested, in this fashion:

It was election night.

Margery had the whim to walk down Broadway through the throngs. She always obeyed all her whims, being a genius. With her was Joseph Brewster, who had had but one whim in all his life, and that was to love Margery, even though she did not love him. And she believed she did not.

The world was in moral rompers to-night, as whimsical as a lovely singer, and as certain of the right to its mood. Yet the crowds were not too dense to see beauty when beauty jostled them, or, rather, when they jostled beauty;

but Margery liked the jostling. Her laughter was a music that only Joseph heard, but no din could ever have robbed his ears of one sound of her voice. Her hand clutched his coat sleeve, and through the nap he could feel the tingle of her excited delight. Her radiant hair made a nimbus about her face, and her eyes were brighter than the wheels of the chariot race. So she and Joseph made their slow passage down the *Alba Via* and neared a certain congested cross street.

At this congested spot a score or so of newsboys had gathered, and were singing, while they waited for an edition. And a little human eddy had formed, to listen to two lads who stood upon a box, singing with gusto a most unholy song.

One boy was Yiddish, and naturally spectacular, all the more so when he had an audience. He won most of the attention, but the nice discriminator could perceive that it was not he, but the other boy, who was the real artist, who had in him the true soul of song.

Danny—his name was Danny Bates—was in no wise aware of soulfulness; he sang simply because it was a little easier to do so than not to do so, and that is the gauge of one's art. And when the duet had ended and the crowd clamored for more, it was Danny who was pushed back upon the box, to sing alone. It was just then that Margery

and Joseph reached the scene, and, of course, Margery must stop to hear the newsboy sing.

Danny had reddened a little, and his laugh was nervous, but not very nervous—for he was not very much embarrassed—and he launched straightway into his solo, which was a little more unholy than the duet. He was staring straight ahead, a plain, sturdy little fellow, with snubby features and a wide, large mouth with a front gap expressive of the too-true truth: *How dens does fugit*. His sooty fingers were rigidly extended, and a cap of no morals clung mysteriously to his hay-colored hair. He sang without gesture, needing none, and thereby proving his real art. The crowd eddied nearer, and Margery's hand was very tight on Joseph Brewster's sleeve.

Joseph knew that pressure; he knew that it heralded a whim. In Margery's eyes was the strange sparkle, the calculating brilliance, that always meant the advent of some unusual, some breathlessly daring impulse. Joseph watched her, hoping only that she would not distribute her rings among the newsies, or cart them all off to her hotel for a feed. He wanted that evening alone with her, for a very important reason.

As Danny finished his song, there was an outburst of cheers and clapping, and one newsy had the enterprise to pass the hat, which immediately tickled with a little chorus of pennies and nickels, and even one quarter from the coffer of Joseph, who had the generosity of the unrich. And now Margery fired her whim at him, point-blank.

"Joe!" she cried excitedly. "*This is the boy I am going to adopt!*"

Joseph lifted his big head and shouted gleefully, after the manner of some large, delighted dog. Ever since he had known her, Margery had been going to adopt a boy. The whim was

one of her most notorious, and one of the soonest forgotten. But never did Joseph more mistake his cue.

"Joseph, I mean it this time!" said Margery resentfully; and Joseph ceased laughing.

"But probably the kid has parents!" he said. But neither was logic his cue, as he discovered.

"Joe, dear," said Margery gently, "you know, don't you, that I have intuitions?" And he did know, for, as a fact, she sometimes had the most extraordinary insights.

With the magic of her voice that drew every one to her, she brought to her side the blushing Danny, followed by two or three of his mates; and, with a smile that bewildered him, bending down toward him so that only he and the other newsies heard, she pried out of him his small biography as a burglar pries jewels from a safe.

His name, his age, where he lived—he told her all.

And he had no parents! He was an orphan, *a priori* and *per se*! Joseph swore amazedly under his breath.

Margery was exquisitely tactful. She did not ask Danny to come to her place; she asked if he would take her to his. With the most careful precision, she set the exact hour at which, to-morrow morning, she would drive to this same spot in a taxicab and go with Danny wherever he lived.

"You see, Danny," she said, with that wonderful smile, "I liked your singing. I sing, too." And then she bent still nearer and added, with intense earnestness: "*Promise* you'll really be here, Danny!"

He promised, for a smile like that, and such eyes, simply bound a fellow, soul and body, to his tryst. So she disappeared in the throngs.

Now, neither Danny nor his mates had heard what Margery had said to Joseph—but his mates were wise in their generation. Although the edition

came out just then, and they all scattered, and the eddy passed on to find other diversion, later, some of his confrères had mirthful gibes for Danny.

"She's going to adopt yuh, Dan!"

"Sure! Didn't she ast did yer have any parents?"

"She's going to make a Caruso of yer, Dan!"

"And y'll wear a fur coat——"

"'N' have ten automobiles——"

"And yer picture in the papes——"

But Danny turned on them with cold logic. "You simps—I'm already adopted! Ain't I?"

"Yes, but yuh didn't tell that tuh her!"

That was true. And this interpretation of the lovely lady's interest in him marred the hopes of Danny. He would have given up the idea of keeping the tryst, had he not promised—had those eyes not looked into his and made him promise. But he was already adopted—oh, yes!

It was no marvel that Danny believed her. Grown-ups believed her—grown-ups, too, who had had full experience of her and her impulses—because at the moment of the impulse she believed herself. When you believe yourself, you convince.

And Danny did not understand the mechanism of whims.

But Joseph Brewster did.

Margery had been encouraged in irresponsibility. She had come to fancy self-indulgence a sort of divine right of genius, and—it is true—the child-of-nature mood became her only too well. It was a pretty vice, and it made many adore her, especially many men.

But Joseph adored her for something that they never looked for in her, or encouraged her to seek in herself. They liked her because she fascinated, amused them. Joseph loved her less selfishly, and he loved her career, too. She had used to feel so earnest about

it, about developing her gift and making it a great gift for her country. But adulation had been poured out on her, flattery had deluged her—and you cannot listen to both flattery and your art. Lately she had been saying much about her art, but doing little. And in Joseph's view, her career was one of the great matters of the universe.

He knew she was sound at heart—but she had had too much admiration. And he trembled for her. He, too, wanted her to give her great gift to her country and put another honor name on its roll.

Joseph was not in moral rompers tonight. He had never been more solemn in his life.

From Broadway, they went to her apartments, to a little supper for two. She was still radiant with the idea of adopting Danny, and she did all the talking, as often happened in Joseph's company. He was capable of no social *tour de force* at any time, and with her he was content just to be near her, listening.

But to-night he had reached a great decision.

Innumerable times he had asked her to marry him. Other men had asked her, but none had remained as patient and as persistent as he—until this winter.

Now Joseph had a rival worthy of him in persistence, if not in patience—a foreigner, and, more than that, an Italian. The Italian was really a distinguished and charming man, sincerely in love with Margery. But Joseph, usually so charitable, could not tolerate this person who was tempting Margery away from her country and her career.

The tempter had titles, and estates, and wealth—and he owned pottery. It was the pottery that fazed Joseph, really. And the gentleman was now in Boston, exhibiting his treasures. That was how Joseph came to have the evening with Margery, who had scanted her

time with him of late. And, for good or ill, he meant to make use of the time.

Once more he asked her to marry him. It was to be the last time.

Margery had been full of her adopting-Danny plans. She broke off, bewildered. Poor Joseph had really chosen the most unpropitious time to propose his last proposal.

"Oh, Joe—don't let's get on to that now!" she said.

He flushed. "You don't understand, dear," he said gently, "but it's different this time. I've been thinking. And this is the last time I shall ever speak about—this. I know you don't believe it—but neither do you believe, dear, how it hurts me to be so near you, and never to have you! I just cannot go on, dear—that's all. I want you to be very, very sure to-night that you do not love me!"

Margery's face fell. How could she be sure? And why should she try?

"You see," Joseph went on gently, but with great earnestness, "if you don't care for me, I'm going away. It's all planned, all. I'm going to South America—and at once."

The earnestness was different from his ordinary seriousness, and Margery knew what he was like when he did make up his mind. She had never calculated upon his going right out of her life, and the idea was so unattractive that she resented his suggesting it.

"I couldn't decide in an instant," she said, flushing. "I don't like ultimatums, Joe!"

"You've had years to decide in, dear. And," he faltered, "it can only mean that you're taking time to choose between me and that—that other fellow."

"Don't say fellow, Joe," she corrected, a bit excited.

"I don't want to mention him at all," said Joseph, "for I can hardly control myself. You know what it means, if

you should marry him! Leaving your country, your career——"

"You think I could forget my art?" she asked.

"Would you go on singing in public?"

She reddened. "I'd develop my art all the more ripely, Joe, over there. The atmosphere is richer—besides, it would be art for art's sake, and not just for money. And I should broaden, and meet people—*distinguished* people."

Joseph sat back from the little table, very pale.

"Very well, Margery! You *have* been thinking, I see! You have your arguments! You have deluded yourself, and you have been carried away by all that foreign flattery! No, you do not love *me*. And yet," he broke out, "it's I who really love you! I love the part of you *he* will never care about—I love what the others don't see in you—Margery!"

Margery rose, full of dignity.

"I'm sorry there's so little good in me that only one person has discovered it."

And she walked away, leaving him very pale at the little table that a moment ago had been so merry with her presence. But his mind was made up; it must be yes or no—and now. He could never go through with it again.

Margery stood with her back to him, more perturbed than she knew, and angry with him for putting it all so crassly. And how could she be sure? She was so used to him; he had no glamour of foreign fascination. The pottery lover was so romantic in comparison, so glamorous; and he knew what Joseph never would know—how to make love. And there, were titles and estates— Yes, she was enamoured.

There sat Joseph, pale, the atmosphere of ultimatum coming from him irrevocably; and the fact that he looked

as if he were being tortured to death did not mitigate the tactless now-or-never effect of his words.

Margery was unused to obeying other people's whims.

The tears came to her eyes; never had she looked lovelier.

"No, Joe—I can't be bullied! It's not like you. I hope you'll be happy in—South America!"

He went a little way toward her, as if taking his torture to her to change even yet by her magic into the happiness he had wanted all these years, but she turned away from him. And, bowing as a blind man might bow, he left the room.

Something told her he had passed through that door for the last time. She burst into tears. If he fancied she would call him back! Margery did not consider the times innumerable when—not directly and honestly, but with her charms and pretty wiles—she had called him back. And now he had rebelled, and was gone. It was appalling—and brutal.

Whims have their unlovely side, and Margery went on to revengefulness. Her foolish pride was hurt.

"He shall see!" she said.

To-morrow, the distinguished foreigner was to return in all his glamour from Boston. Very well, to-morrow she would give him the answer he had urged with such impatience. And Joseph should read of the engagement; that should be the news item he would carry with him to South America.

And now that she had decided upon the foreign marriage, she was a little excited—and a little scared.

She thought of her art, which she tried to believe would "develop the more richly" over there, where there was "atmosphere." If her conscience spoke—and it did—she stilled it, for she had long bullied this conscience, and its voice had become timid and weak.

Nevertheless, she had a very indifferent night.

Not until noon next day, when she awoke after such sleep as she had managed to get, did Margery even remember Danny Bates, the newsboy.

She was ashamed, but it was too late now to keep the tryst with the little fellow who had looked up into her face, his gamin incredulity changing into faith, as he had promised to be there! She could not find where he lived, for that detail she had left to Joseph. True, she could not have adopted Danny now, but she might have done something for him. How he had sung his vile, little song!

She was in no radiant mood to-day; she was by turns sad and excited, ashamed and defiant—and she kept seeing Joseph as he had looked when he had left the room and the happiness he had wanted so many years.

And her pride made it impossible— But there, she did not want to call him back. And, indeed, he would not, perhaps, have come!

Danny waited at the trysting place till noon.

Though the other boys guyed him, his faith did not waver. He had looked into those wondrous promise eyes, and could not doubt. Perhaps she was detained, or ill.

He had been wondering about her all morning, and the more he remembered, the more was he sure that he had seen her before. One sees a deal on the *Alba Via*—and she had said she sang. Who was she, the lady of the promise eyes?

But as for being a singer, *he*— Ah, no! He wanted, and expected, to be an aviator. Was he not the maker of the most marvelous kites ever flown in Greenwich Village? For he lived in Greenwich—the low-roofed heaven of kites.

And Greenwichward he turned at

noon—of afternoons he had to attend school—and walked all the way to Horatio Street, a respectably long walk.

He climbed two flights of rickety stairs and opened a dingy door.

"Hello, Mr. Tertius!" he called, not too boisterously, going in and closing the dingy door.

In the dingy half window was a little table, littered with the small tools of some delicate and minute occupation. At the table sat an old man, who raised his silvery-white head as Danny entered, and said mildly:

"Well, well, Daniel, is it noon?"

"Yes, and past, sir," said Danny. "Dinner's going cold."

"I recall, now," said the old gentleman, "that Mrs. Grady did bring it in. But you were not here yet."

He began with great care to put away certain fine mechanisms, sighing happily as he did so. He had a strikingly fine head, and his eyes were clear, with that keen, limpid clearness seen sometimes in the eyes of the old. His expression was sweet, and at the same time it was the expression of a man wholly concentrated upon some one consuming thought. As he moved to the table where the greasy stew was growing tallowy, his feet made a queer, shuffling sound; this was due to two brown paper bags which incased his shoes, being tied at the ankles.

At table he made certain preparations, evidently customary. On each knee he placed a paper napkin, tucking a third under his chin, where it moved up and down as he ate. His mind was far from his food, and he conversed with Danny upon wholly adult topics, to which Danny responded out of his premature wisdom. It was odd enough to see the boy tilt back his head, with his eyes half shut, as he cogitated his remarks, while his aged companion regarded him seriously, the paper napkin suspending its queer flutterings under his chin.

Danny had not mentioned the promise lady to Mr. Tertius, for a reason that he was keeping most carefully within his youthful, hay-covered head.

"How's the bird, sir?" he asked presently, saying "the bird" as he would have said the monument, or the department of the interior, or something else national in scope and import.

Mr. Tertius sighed gently.

"Very near completion, Daniel. Indeed, it is completed." And, pushing away his plate, the old gentleman again sighed, while an expression exalted, yet almost fearful, came over his pale, delicate face. "Of course, one cannot say what testing will reveal—but I have faith, Daniel—I have faith!"

"I guess so!" cried Danny, tilting back his hay-colored head.

"I thought to test it when you return from school, Daniel. And it is time—time! I have been long at the task—and one can be too long, Daniel. The world will not wait *always*. Last spring I hoped—birds belong with spring! But I was slow."

"There are winter birds, too," said Danny.

Mr. Tertius nodded. "Yes. And we must not wait till another spring! 'There is a tide which, taken at the flood——' Who knows? Another might give to the world what I design for it—— No, the gift must go now, Daniel." And his voice trembled slightly.

"But, sir," said Danny, "no other could! No other feller could *make* the bird!"

Mr. Tertius smiled. "A dangerous sophistry, my boy! The time brings the gift—if one fails, another arises to the task. Think of Darwin and Wallace! And," he added, bending on Danny his limpid, bright eyes, "I feel that no other must give my gift! No other could *feel* it as I have felt it!"

"But, sir," began Danny awkwardly, yet anxiously, "how will you give it?"

Mike Reilly's uncle invented an automatic policeman's whistle, and they cheated him out of it, and made a lot of money——"

The old gentleman removed his paper napery, and rose with an air of beneficent dignity.

"Those details do not matter, Daniel. This is a *gift*. And what the world has been waiting for, it will be ready to receive."

He returned to the little table in the window, and Danny left.

But Danny did not go to school.

It had come to him at last who she was. He remembered quite plainly now—he had used to watch her as she left the small theater, where her program had drawn brief throngs.

That is the advantage of the *Alba Via*—you get to know every one.

And the telephone book would tell him where she lived.

And he sped, not schoolward, but quite elsewhere. It was important to Danny, for there was no telling what an hour or a day might mean. Of course, she could not adopt *him*—he would tell her that—but she could adopt the *bird*! And the bird did sing, and Danny didn't care about singing; he wanted to fly. But here was the bird, Mr. Tertius' gift to the world—and Danny knew more about the world than Mr. Tertius. If some one of influence would take charge of the bird, why, the world would have to pay Mr. Tertius for it, and then he wouldn't sit around in unheated rooms, with his feet in paper bags. Yes, Danny knew the world.

True, the bird was a secret—but if the promise lady saw it, and if Mr. Tertius once looked into her eyes, everything would come out right—even the telling of a secret.

"And she'll come—if I find her!" he said. And the *Alba Via* had taught him how to find what he sought.

Now you are to see what a foolish fellow was Joseph Brewster.

It was nearing the time when Danny should come from school. Mr. Tertius rose from his little table and stood motionless, his thin, delicate hands clasped, his silvery head raised, in the attitude of the prophet who has finished his work and gazes beyond, into the vision his work has enabled him to see. There was exaltation in his face, and humility.

The knock at the door was repeated thrice before he heard it.

"Enter!" he said, mildly wondering.

A big, sober man stepped inside and bowed. Mr. Tertius also bowed.

"You are welcome, sir," he said, with dignity. "Whom have I the honor to receive?"

"My name is Brewster," said the big man, "Joseph Brewster. I am aware, sir, that I am not known to you, but I have come upon a matter—if I am not encroaching upon your time——"

"My time is no longer of value," said Mr. Tertius kindly. "My task is just completed, and I was picturing its results—a little flight of fancy, sir. Did you come to ask about the bird?"

"The bird!" Joseph faltered.

Mr. Tertius bowed. He was not surprised at the appearance of a stranger; it was compatible with the completion of his great gift that the world, for which it was designed, should now send its emissaries.

"Yes, sir. I was only awaiting Daniel's return from school to test the mechanism. We had not anticipated additional audience, but the honor is ours. There have been other birds, sir—there have been two notable Swiss examples—but I dare to believe, sir, that mine is more notable. Daniel will be here shortly. Will you be seated?"

Of course, Joseph had not come about the bird, knowing nothing of it. Why, then, was he in Horatio Street?

Simply because he was a foolish fel-

low. He had, in short, taken it into his head to adopt Danny himself, and carry him off to South America!

Danny represented something to Joseph. It was that better something in Margery which he loved so. Danny was symbolic, as it were, of her really noble whims—and Joseph knew that some of them were noble. And again, would it not be less lonely in South America if he had some one to care for, to work for? He would be carrying out for her the good impulse that she had abandoned. So Joseph reasoned.

And he had found Danny because he had remembered the address, having a knack for such details as numbers.

But he was all in the dark as to a bird.

The time being nearly come for the trial of his gift to the world, Mr. Tertius had begun to show some traces of excitement. His face was flushed, his soft eyes startlingly bright, and several times he glanced at the clock. Then suddenly he seemed to listen.

"He's coming!" he said, his voice trembling a bit. "The moment, sir, has come!"

He drew forth what seemed to be a small box with a cover over it, and again listened. There were steps on the stairs, but it seemed as if more than one person was ascending. Mr. Tertius, listening, looked at Joseph, who had stood up—for there was the sound of a rippling laugh, and then a voice so familiar— He and the old man gazed, speechless, at each other. The steps ascended quickly—

The door was flung open and Danny rushed in.

"Mr. Tertius—there's a lady—to hear the bird!"

And Margery came in.

Mr. Tertius advanced, unsurprised and mildly radiant.

"You are welcome, madam. Now,

indeed, the bird will sing!" And he bowed exquisitely.

And then Margery saw Joseph.

"Margery!" cried Joseph. He came toward her, his honest face lighting up with a sort of exultation. "I might have known! I might have known you meant it! You *did* mean to adopt him! Why didn't I see it was the heart in you that spoke last night? And I thought it one of your whims! And I came—I came here to adopt him myself! And you meant it all the time!"

The red had flamed over Margery's face. For the moment she believed it all a trap, but Danny was excitedly trying to explain matters.

"No—oh, no, sir! No one's going to adopt me—Mr. Tertius adopted me! She came to see the bird! I fetched her!"

Mr. Tertius had stood motionless. Now he spoke—and, although with the utmost dignity, his voice was trembling slightly:

"What, may I ask of you, is this that I hear about Daniel being adopted?" As they did not reply, he added simply, "I have adopted Daniel. And so, sir"—he turned politely to Joseph—"you did not come for the purpose of hearing the bird?"

"Sir," Joseph stammered, wondering what under heaven the bird was, but unable to think of anything except the truth, "we heard Danny singing last night—and—this lady is interested in singing. We did not give the boy a chance to mention you, sir, or he would undoubtedly have done so."

"But, sir—what do you mean?" asked Mr. Tertius, fixing his keen, clear eyes upon Joseph. "Am I to understand that Daniel has a voice?"

"No, no!" put in Danny, in tones of anguish. "No, sir, I ain't got no voice! I'm going to be an aviator! This lady came to hear the bird!"

And then Margery's face lighted with

the lovely expression it wore when her feelings were touched.

"Yes, Mr. Tertius, sir—we came to hear the bird—if we may!" And she glanced shyly at Joseph.

But Mr. Tertius was gazing strangely before him, and he made no move toward the little box that held the bird. In his eyes was an austerity that awed them.

"Daniel sings!" he repeated, in a strange, trembling voice. "And you thought to adopt him—I have a small sum saved for him—but— He has always whistled, I think, at home. It would be very strange," he said, the trembling increasing, "if I have given my thoughts, my soul, to a mechanism of song, while in my midst—a human voice— How is it," he demanded suddenly, "that I have not known?"

Danny's snubby face wrinkled. "Mr. Tertius!" he cried out anxiously, "it's the bird that sings! I'm going to be an aviator!"

Mr. Tertius did not hear him.

"Is this my triumph? Is this the end of my long task?" he murmured quiveringly; "that I should design for the world a gift that would express my soul, my love—and beneath my own roof a human soul was being denied expression? If," gazing at them, "I have been so blind as that, my gift can have nothing to express, and it is not the gift for which the world waits, and I have been a blind worker, working in the dark!"

"No, no, sir!" cried Margery, and in her excitement she flung at Joseph such a look as he would not have taken years of his life for, so precious was it to him. "No, sir! If you have worked so long, and with such love in your heart—why, the bird will be full of it, sir! Let it sing now, sir—let us hear it! It will be *your soul* we shall hear!"

He looked at her, and she was so radiant, so full of the wonderful compelling magnetism of her mood, that he obeyed her. He uncovered the little box and opened it, and a small, golden-feathered creature revealed itself, a little wonder thing that, as the lid fell back, fluttered its wings, lifted its head, and, after a few wonderful liquid chirps, began such a song as surely never before came from a mechanism in all the years of the world. It was not mechanism, it was life. The bird quivered with its melody; its beak opened for the notes, and trembled with their outpouring; the little wings lifted and shook; even the eyes seemed alive; and the marvelous melody poured forth from that quivering, golden throat and filled the dingy dwelling with a song of triumph and love.

The tears were bright in Margery's eyes when the song ceased.

"Did you think, sir," she said humbly to Mr. Tertius, "that the world could ever hear *that* and not know the value of the gift? The world knows, sir, that it needs such love!"

And as Mr. Tertius, the austerity gone from his eyes and a look of radiant content on his delicate face, closed the little box that held his gift, Margery went into the big, eager arms that were trembling for their burden.

"Oh, Joseph!" she said, sobbing. "And I thought I loved my art!"

But Margery was not done with whims. Indeed, her most brilliant one was yet to come. And this time it was not whim, it was inspiration.

"Sir," she cried, going to Mr. Tertius, who beamed at her from his keen, limpid eyes, "you've adopted Danny—*won't you adopt Joe and me, too?*"

"Yes," he said mildly. "My task is finished—yes."

"But, no, sir," said Margery quickly, "it is only begun!"



STORIES OF THE SUPER-WOMEN

by Albert Payson Terhune

Find the Woman. You will find her in almost every generation, in almost every country, in almost every big city—the super-woman. She is not the typical adventuress; she is not a genius. The reason for her strange power is occult. When philosophers have thought they had segregated the cause—the formula—what you will—in one particular super-woman or group of super-women, straightway some new member of the clan has arisen who wields equal power with her notable sisters, but who possesses none of the traits that made them irresistible. And the seekers of formulas are again at sea. What makes the super-woman? Is it beauty? Cleopatra and Rachel were homely. Is it daintiness? Marguerite de Valois washed her hands but twice a week. Is it wit? Pompadour and Du Barry were avowedly stupid in conversation. Is it youth? Diane de Poitiers and Ninon de l'Enclos were wildly adored at sixty. Is it the subtle quality of feminism? George Sand, who numbered her admirers by the score—poor Chopin in their foremost rank—was not only ugly, but disgustingly mannish. So was Semiramis. The nameless charm is found almost as often in the masculine “advanced” woman as in the delicate, ultrafeminine damsel. Here are the stories of super-women who conquered at will. Some of them smashed thrones; some were content with wholesale heart-smashing. Wherein lay their secret? Or rather, their secrets? For seldom did any two of them follow the same plan of campaign.

ADAH MENKEN,

Idol of Poets and Pugilists.

NO one knew positively who she was or whence she came. One version told of a babyhood on the Texas panhandle; another of quasi-noble birth in New Orleans, and of the stately, three-decker, baptismal name of Dolores Adios Fuertes. Some people claimed to remember her as little Adelaide McCord, of Chartrain, Louisiana. There are rumors, too, of an infant-prodigy dancing tour through Texas and Mexico.

But actual history—and fate—first meet her in 1856, when, aged twenty-one, she married Abraham Isaac Menken, a Jewish musician in a New Orleans theater, and took for the rest of her life the name Adah Menken.

The cognomen long outlasted its donor, for Adah quickly shelved Abraham Isaac. The bearer of those patriarchal titles slipped out of her life with scarcely a ripple. It is not even certain that she bothered to divorce him.

Indeed, throughout her successive marital experiences—they were four, possibly five—she had a careless way of neglecting to put a legal end to the old love before assuming the new. There were at least four marriage ceremonies; perhaps more. But of divorce records there appears to have been a woeful dearth.

To New York came Adah Menken in the late fifties, bringing with her a hard-earned Southern reputation as an ac-

tress and a far more easily acquired fame as the most beautiful woman in North America.

Her figure—fearlessly and frankly displayed in fully a hundred extant photographs—was flawlessly lovely, on Milo rather than Medici lines. Her features were Grecian; her eyes large and fathomless; her expression perverse, piquant, and wholly irresistible. Even the weird mid-century fashions could not make her otherwise than a joy to the eye; but, for fear that they might, she took the precaution to be photographed again and again in costumes that might be described as negligible rather than negligee.

Revamping the old "Mazeppa," in which Lola Montez had so signally failed, Adah Menken scored an incredible success in its name rôle. For she could act. And, besides— Well, in the scene where the Ukraine hero is half stripped and bound to the back of the fiery, untamed, property-desert steed, Adah Menken's pluck in lying athwart the back of the unguided horse, as the well-trained brute thundered up an eighteen-inch runway, shared with her entirely revealed figure the delight and wonder of the crowded house.

Once the steed made a misstep, and he and the fast-bound rider crashed down from a height, through the side of a craggy canvas mountain, to the stage below. Adah, bleeding and dazed, tore herself free, jerked her mount to his feet, and repeated the daring climb. This sort of thing endeared her to the gallery, whence nightly a gasp of pure bliss was wont to exhale at the hetman's shout of:

"Bring forth the horse!"

Adah's courage and form won the heart of an expert along both those lines, a man with the grim pluck of a gladiator and the shape of a Farnese Hercules—John C. Heenan, the pugilistic "white hope" of an era when hope had as yet showed no sign of assum-

ing a brunet tinge. Heenan was at his fistic zenith. And Adah Menken quite lost her heart to him. In 1859 they were married. The union was as primitive as the Iliad's version of the loves of Venus and Mars.

But Adah Menken was no mere gallery idol, fit for nothing but cheap melodrama and the displaying of a faultless form. There was another side to her strange personality; a side that drove her to writing poetry of high and heart-born merit, to snatching fame as a sculptor, to winning the adoration of men to whom the physical was as nothing in comparison to the mental and the psychic. Hers was a dual personality that could delight in brute strength and in ringside slang, and at the same time be wholly at home in royal courts or in the society of such masters as Dickens and Swinburne.

It was the second phase of this personality that led her to leave the bull-throated Heenan and to forsake gatherings of flashy sporting men for those of local literary folk. In 1862 she married Robert H. Newell, the once-famous "Orpheus C. Kerr," and went with him to California; New York seeming for the moment a rather unsafe abiding place for the gentle Orpheus, while Heenan, raging over his loss, was moodily stamping its streets and explaining to his friends in minute detail just what he intended to do to Newell should he chance to lay hands on him.

In California camps, as later in Europe's salons, Adah was perfectly at home. Hearts by the gross rolled at her feet. She could have weighed her gold dust on avoirdupois scales had she so chosen. But she did not choose.

She was in no sense an adventuress. Wealth had no appeal for her. She did not yearn to sway politics, to bring rich men to her feet, to capitalize in any way her charms. She wanted excitement and a good time; nothing more. Hers was merely the eternally mysterious

child spirit; a spirit that was to sow with white worry hairs the head of many a world-famed man.

Tiring of Newell, Adah Menken came again to New York, where she met the Honorable Mr. Stanley, grandson and heir to the Earl of Derby. Stanley was in this country studying American conditions. After his meeting with her, he ceased studying conditions and began to study Adah.

It was her first experience with a man of his stamp, and she was fascinated; yet not too much so to keep her noble admirer demurely at arm's length. Stanley was unused to such opposition. Coming as it did from a mere Bowery Theater actress, he was at first inclined to resent it. Then it amused him. Then he framed a campaign to break it down.

It was a duel of wits, this affair between the much-married actress of unknown origin and the scion of an ancient house. Stanley spent thousands of dollars on the attack—and had his labor for his pains. He showered the coy Adah with jewels; he vowed eternal constancy; he promised everything under the sun—except to make her the future Countess of Derby. A glimmering remnant of sanity prevented him from giving that particular pledge. And that pledge was the only one of the collection that Adah was at all interested in receiving from him.

She really cared for him—it was wonderfully easy for her to care for men—but she wanted to be his wife, not merely his sweetheart. She always wanted to be the wife of the men for whom she cared. And hitherto she had always gratified the wish. There was against her at that time no breath of the usual stage scandal of the day.

She loved Stanley, and she wanted to marry him. He loved her, and he had too much sense to marry her. And at that deadlock the affair stood. Apart from his natural hesitation about mak-

ing "Mazeppa's" star the Countess of Derby, Stanley would have stood a very good chance of arrest for bigamy had he married her. For in England, divorce from one husband was considered an absolutely necessary prelude to marriage with another.

"Why do you harp so on marriage?" he asked her one day, in a fit of peevishness. "To hear your views, one would think there is no happiness except in wedlock."

"There isn't—for me," she retorted. "I always like to marry. I've got into the habit, you see. And, besides, it's so nice and respectable."

"There is a ring I saw in a shop yesterday—" began Stanley, to shift the subject.

"That doesn't interest me," interrupted Adah, "unless it chanced to be a plain gold band."

At last, disgusted, beaten, fuming, the lordling fled from New York and from the untemptable temptress. He went to the Rockies on the customary big-game hunt; and so out of Adah Menken's life and out of this story.

Next came the triumphant progress through Europe. Adah was asked to play "Mazeppa" in London. From the first performance, the often stodgy British public lost its head and its heart to her. Her receipts for a single week, at boom prices, mounted to nearly seventy thousand dollars. The Prince of Wales—afterward Edward VII., and at that time a lean, lank, and somewhat callow youth—laid violent siege to her affections; not that it was any surprising novelty for him to fall in love, but it added the needful cachet to Adah's reception by the loyal British. To discarded Heenan, the slugger, here in America, she wrote:

The prince is still devotion itself. He throws me ten-guinea bouquets. Twenty policemen nightly guard my carriage, the crowd is so immense.

A swarm of youthful noblemen, duti-

fully following their prince's example, overwhelmed Adah with attentions. She might have married any of a dozen of them, and thus have gratified her whilom fancy to join the peerage. But she did not chance to care for any of these monocled wooers—and Adah Menken seldom if ever married where she did not love.

Besides, she had found a class of men that pleased her far better than did the titled loiterers in the prince's set. She had caught the notice of a coterie of English geniuses—a coterie led by such men as Swinburne, Reade, and other immortals. Swinburne openly adored her. He encouraged her fancy for verse writing. In fact, more than one of Adah's countless love poems are said to have been written by Swinburne, who fatuously allowed his inamorata to swell her growing literary reputation by signing "Adah Menken" to the inspired verses.

Critics claim to have detected some of these Swinburne poems in the Menken volume of verse, "Infelice." The names of the possible creators of the pieces of statuary attributed to Adah's versatile hand are not known.

Adah could not marry Swinburne, for marriage was not one of the poet's diversions; but the mutual infatuation was none the less strong on that account. Adah had no especial reputé to lose, and Swinburne openly and rhythmically advocated the worship of Venus. So, apart from giving the British public a delicious thrill of horror, no great harm seems to have been done to the name of either adorer.

In the heyday of their affair, Adah's craving to be photographed bobbed up again; with the result that a picture of her and the genius-ridden Algernon Charles Swinburne was soon flashed upon the grinning world. The photograph represents Swinburne standing in an attitude of adoration in front of the seated Adah, gazing down into her

upraised eyes and clasping her left hand lovingly in his right. Adah's right hand rests on the poet's shoulder.

In after years, Swinburne—grown more respectable or less ardent—moved heaven and earth to have this picture suppressed. But he was too late. The photograph by that time had too many copies. I have even seen a reproduction of it in an American newspaper.

The titular poet of passion then avenged himself by surlily refusing to contribute a penny toward the monument that old-time admirers of Adah were erecting over her grave in Père Lachaise Cemetery, in Paris; a monument whose sole inscription, beyond name and dates, are the two words: "Thou Knowest!"

From Swinburne, Adah was attracted to Charles Dickens. There was a lively and not at all acrimonious correspondence between the American actress and the brain father of Mr. Boffin. Adah even prevailed on the master to stand godfather to a book she wrote, and to boost it to the skies. Dickens went further, he edited—"edited" may or may not be another word for "wrote"—some of her burning poems.

In fact, if the names of all poems' real authors were indelibly branded in acrostic form or otherwise on the verses themselves, it is quite possible that Adah Menken's "Infelice" might bear a striking resemblance to a mid-Victorian anthology of famous poets.

Charles Reade, grumpy and ungracious to the world at large, thawed to the simmering point under Adah's smile. She was a constant visitor at his square Georgian villa, and he was forever giving supper parties in her honor.

At one of these parties—it could not have been a very Neronic debauch—the chief form of amusement was provided by Reade, Dickens, Swinburne, and other worthies, who recited poems by themselves or by Adah or by lesser lights. Reade undertook to recite a

lyric that just then was coming into world prominence, and whose chief interest lay in the fact that nobody could guess at its authorship; not that there was any lack of claimants to the title, but that none could then—or later—make good the claim.

The poem was that chaste, if shopworn, ditty entitled "Beautiful Snow."

As Reade began his recitation, Adah Menken started dramatically. Her mobile face took on the look of one who sees a ghost or finds two dollars in a last year's suit. She could scarce wait for the last lines of "Beautiful Snow" to dribble from the novelist's lips before crying aloud in crass amaze:

"Why, that's *my* poem! I wrote it years ago, and sent it to a magazine. I never heard from it again. It must have been accepted and printed without my hearing of it. What a pity I didn't keep a rough draft!"

The fact that she, almost alone of all the reputed authors of "Beautiful Snow," did not offer to produce a yellow and interlined draft of the poem, is perhaps strong testimony as to her claim's validity. But she found it hard to convince her hearers of the fact that night, several of them having seen poems of their own under her signature.

From London, Adah journeyed to Paris. And there, more than anywhere else, she came into her own. At first sight, the Emperor Napoleon III.—poor, pudgy ghost of the Austerlitz man—fell head over heels in love with her. Napoleon was ever generous with his more or less loyal subjects' money. And presently Adah was installed in a Champs-Élysées mansion, better fitted for a foreign ambassador than for an obscure actress.

She was no Lola Montez, with dreams of empire, but very contentedly took what the luck gods sent her way. She knew the fickleness of imperial favor—there were too many instances of

it on record at that period for her to ignore them—and she did not hazard shortening that favor still further by trying to play the game of politics or by presuming on the emperor's love. Temporarily she put behind her her perennial yearning for matrimony, and accepted the attentions of Napoleon the Little at their face value.

To Adah's Paris house gathered the same class of men that had brightened her stay in London. The elder Dumas went on his fat knees at her feet, and there laid his oft-broken, ever-remended heart. Théophile Gautier, whose "Mademoiselle de Maupin" was then in its full glory, followed suit. So did many another genius whose name was and is a household word in two continents. Swinburne and others of the London coterie had followed Adah across the Channel. Later admirers had followed all the way from America. Here is a partial list of guests who were lucky enough to be admitted to one of her renowned "breakfasts": Dickens, Swinburne, Dumas père, Thomson, the English poet, General J. C. Breckenridge, the Duke of Hamilton, Colonel Tom P. Ochiltree, Prince Polignac, and the Count de Veri.

A cosmopolitan gathering, forsooth, for the "Mazeppa" heroine to be entertaining in the French emperor's gift house! A company that embraced the foremost names in all the world.

Again did Adah's love for photography cause trouble—though, as usual, not to herself. She persuaded Dumas to be photographed with her twice. One of the pictures was posed in much the same attitude as that with Swinburne. The other, and far better known, represented the portly author of "The Three Guardsmen" seated close—very close indeed—beside Adah on a narrow fauteuil. Dumas was clad in collarless negligee shirt, baggy trousers, and slippers; Adah in evening dress. Adah's head reposed confidently on Dumas'

breast. Dumas' plump left arm encircled Adah's waist. His right hand imprisoned her left. There was nothing even faintly suggestive of the platonic about the pose.

Nor was the photograph intended merely as a love souvenir, to be guarded as such by its two subjects. Every one who knew either of them saw it. News of its existence reached a picture dealer. The dealer made Dumas a fabulous offer for the negative. Dumas, eternally hard up for ready money, sold it.

Within a week nearly every print shop in Paris had its show windows stuffed full of the photographs. Crowds gathered and gazed and gasped and giggled at the pictured presentation of France's premier novelist embracing a gorgeous-looking foreign woman. Copies of the photograph were bought by the hundred.

Dumas chuckled unctuously when his friends remonstrated. The old genius had a fine vein of humor, and he saw the joke on himself as well as did his mortified admirers. But he was overweeningly vain, too. And, at his age, he was not averse to letting the public know that he could still enslave the heart of a young and Venuslike beauty.

His son—Alexandre Dumas fils, of "Camille" fame—was well-nigh heart-broken at this latest antic on the part of his prodigal father. He bribed, bullied, pleaded, invoked the law—all in vain—to have the picture removed from the shop windows.

All things come to an end—if one waits long enough. And Adah Menken did not want to wait. She was the most talked-of woman in Europe. She had had a glorious time over there. She had made money. She had won fame—legitimate and otherwise. She was not minded to wait on and become an old story, to see some newer notoriety eclipse her.

So, at the acme of her triumphs, she

suddenly announced that she was homesick, and that she was going back to New York. And back she went.

New York did not acclaim her as Paris and London had done, but it gave her a fairly cordial welcome, and went as of yore to see her in "Mazeppa." Her mania for being photographed broke out afresh. Napoleon Sarony's first professional work, so runs the story, was a photograph of Adah Menken. This was in 1865. In one of her photographs she wears on her head what is said to have been Sarony's own sacred embroidered skullcap, which was so familiar to New Yorkers of a generation ago.

With her photograph fad reawoke her taste for getting married. Her newest husband, whom she wedded in 1866, was James Barclay, a rich man about town. Barclay built for her a house as one of his wedding presents. In affectionate memory of Dickens, Adah named her new abode "Bleak House." It was situated on the west side of Seventh Avenue, a few doors north of Thirty-eighth Street, being the upper of the "twin" brownstone houses there. Brownstone, then and later, was New York's last and ugliest word in architectural elegance, a "brownstone front" being the seal of luxury—even as, a century earlier, red brick and white marble denoted Philadelphia's idea of universal perfection.

For a time, Adah was happy enough in her new home. She was once more a wife—and that condition always appeased her erratic cravings for respectability. Her husband was rich, and spent money freely on her. There was no further danger of poverty or of a lonely old age. She had come into the ideal retirement of the average adventuress.

But Adah was not an average adventuress. Indeed, as I have tried to show you, the dreary title "adventuress" was at best a wretched misfit for

such a woman. And she was not content.

New York, just after the Civil War, was as different from to-day's Gotham as is a village sewing circle from a tango tea, as brownstone from lapis lazuli. We were hopelessly provincial. Our theaters were few, and were frowned upon by many of the best people.

Our social life was stilted and exclusive, and had no place at all for an actress with a lively and pyrotechnic past. There were no such delightful bohemian groups of geniuses and not wholly bad women as London and Paris could boast.

New York was busy, thrifty, and—from a pleasure seeker's standpoint—fearfully slow. There was no appreciable middle ground between the prim pillars of respectability and the toughest element.

To a woman like Adah Menken, spoiled by years of Parisian glitter and wit and eternal gayety, there was nothing permanently worth while in Manhattan. She had pretended to be homesick for America. She was actually homesick and heartsick for Paris. Even matrimony and photography could not fill the void.

So, bidding a fairly affectionate goodbye to her husband and a decidedly relieved farewell to New York, she sailed for Paris.

But—out of sight, out of mind. In her American loneliness, Adah Menken had thought of nothing but Paris. Paris, having plenty of newer things to think of, had practically forgotten Adah Menken. It was, all over again, the story of the grown man who returns after many years to his small-town boyhood home. The natives seldom give him an ovation. Most of them have forgotten him. The place has outgrown all memory of him, all need for his presence.

Paris served Adah Menken the same natural, but cruel, trick. The emperor had seen many a pretty face since her time. So had Dumas, Gautier, and the rest. She was a back number. And it broke her heart.

Adah Menken died, in her adored, but no longer adoring, Paris, in 1868. She was buried there, a few old friends belatedly recalling former times to the extent of raising a subscription for a moderate-priced tombstone, the French capital's last and shabbiest gift to the superwoman it had once delighted to worship.



Peter and Paul WELLS HASTINGS.



AUNTIE MARTHA cocked her head on one side in a final scrutiny of the table, and decided that one of the old silver forks lay a little awry; otherwise everything was quite as it should be. The cloth, like all the linen in her charge, was of snowy whiteness; the heavy, old silver glistened in the candlelight; the wineglass and the water glass, side by side by Graham's plate, sparkled in crystalline splendor; even the fruit in the little Dresden-china baskets—Auntie Martha, from some innate sense of balance, always set out two, even when Graham dined alone—seemed to blush and glow with a more than mundane beauty. She straightened the fork, and smoothed down her immaculate apron with immaculate black hands. A glance in the kitchen mirror had already assured her that her turban was quite as it should be.

She went into the little hall and called up the stairs to Graham. It was one of the privileges she allowed herself, a concession to her years and weight.

"I's jes' nach'ly 'bleeged to holler fo' yo', Misteh Peteh. Ef I clome all dese yer triflin' li'l' steps ev'y time I mus' summon yo', dis li'l' pinch ob a house wouldn' las' no time," she had told Graham.

"Misteh Peteh, Misteh Peteh!" she called now, and waited, listening.

No sound came from above, and she called again, and at last began laboriously to climb the stairs, grumbling as she went.

"Nice, nice li'l' dinneh all gettin' col'! 'Pears like it ain' no use cookin' good things foh that man." Her heart softened, however, as she reached the top, and her perpetual pride in Graham submerged her indignation. "That chile suttinly am wukkin' too hahd writin' dem plays ob hisn. Wuk hisse'f into a sick spell fus' thing he know." She tapped gently upon his door.

"Yes, auntie," Graham's voice answered, somewhat guiltily. "I'll be down in a moment."

Five minutes later he was down, and starting on Auntie Martha's clam broth. Behind him, the old colored woman shook her head sorrowfully, as she straightened the collar of his dinner coat; for she knew that before her knock Graham had not even started to dress. "Wuk hisse'f sick," she thought again.

As a matter of fact, Graham had not been working in the technical sense intended by Auntie Martha. He had put aside his new play early in the afternoon, and since that time had been engaged upon a work of fiction. He had been writing a letter that, from start to finish, was an elaborate tissue of lies.

Auntie Martha, with the inconsistency of love, saw Peter Paul Graham

as at once a lovable little boy and the greatest man in the world; and, though her affection shot far over the actual truth, its general direction was not far from wrong. Peter Graham—the Paul had long since dropped into obscurity—really was a figure of some importance. His name was pretty generally known to the English-speaking world, and already—he was just thirty-two—his plays had brought him in a very considerable fortune. For the rest, there really was much that was boyish and lovable about him. It was perhaps this very quality of youth, guided by the reins of a mature mind, that had given his work its peculiar vitality and charm.

His successes had been the only adventures in his life; he had not fought his way from poverty and hardship to his present affluence. Alone in the world, and with a comfortable amount of money, he had come directly from his university to this little red brick house near Washington Square, and with the old colored woman to watch over him, had laid orderly siege to fortune. He had begun his career with the distinct advantage of knowing what he wanted to do in life. He intended to be a dramatist, and, with hard work and a sure ability, he had become one. He thought of himself comfortably as a rising young man, and, considering that he already stood at the top of his profession, the thought was a modest one.

Like many men who have chosen sedentary occupation, he had an out-of-doors physique. He was tall and large boned and loosely knit; his features were clear cut, and sprinkled with an abundance of freckles; his rough hair was a sandy brown; his appearance, in fact, was perfectly satisfactory to everybody. He was homely enough to disarm suspicion in men; and yet, when he was captured by his manager's press agent and haled away to a famous

photographer's for the benefit of an interested public, when his short hair had been persuaded into temporary smoothness, and his body enticed into temporary grace, the result—with the humor and freckles removed—was eminently satisfactory from the managerial standpoint.

To that vast army of young women who try the first flutterings of a newly discovered capacity for romance upon a vicarious abstraction, this picture seemed to combine felicitously the salient qualities of four characters—Apollo, Oliver Cromwell, Ivanhoe, and John Keats. Graham himself had been presented by his manager with a dozen large sepia platinum copies of it. Eleven of them lay in an old trunk in a dark corner of the cellar; his mind, as he proceeded with his dinner, was guiltily upon the twelfth.

Auntie Martha passed and repassed, squeezing in and out of the pantry door, serving him watchfully. Graham, feeling her eye upon him, ate ravenously.

"Auntie Martha," he asked, "have there been any hotel detectives around here to-day? I think I shall have to be getting a watchdog."

Auntie Martha chuckled rapturously. "Lordee, Misteh Peteh, how yo' does talk an' ac'! Co'se dey ain't, an' I ain' seen no signs ob no dray, neider, an' dey suah would need one to cart off dis yere 'ooman."

It was a joke of Graham's which never failed to please her that prominent New York hotels envied him her cooking to the verge of a criminal desperation.

It was under cover of her chuckles that he asked casually for his evening's mail. She brought it to him, with a profound solemnity and a glance of darkly anxious suspicion. To her mind, he had been much too anxious for his mail of late. She was sensitively certain of some hidden "goin's on." Os-

tentatively on the top of the pile lay the letter he was looking for, and, although Graham, still conscious that he was under observation, slipped it, with a fine indifference, into the pocket of his dinner jacket, the old colored woman felt that her suspicions had been again confirmed.

And it is true that her instinct was not at fault. There had been "goin's on," pen-and-ink escapades of which, six months ago, Graham would have believed himself incapable.

Like every man whose achievements are constantly bringing him before the public, he received daily a quantity of mail from people who were strangers to him—letters of congratulation, letters of flattery, begging letters, threatening letters, and, not infrequently—more especially since the publication of his romantic unlikeness—love letters, which ranged from shy confession of admiration to actual proposal of marriage.

As first all these letters had amused him; he was happy to have done well, and it warmed him to hear that others liked his work. Letters of praise and criticism he usually answered with a little note—now practically an unvarying form; the rest he read, and laughed at, and threw away. He disliked beggars; he was untroubled by threats; and he was much too sane and unspoiled to be lured into any romantic correspondence with *matinée* girls, or foolish, sentimental women.

He had, however, made one exception. Something in a note that had come to him had caught his fancy. He could not quite have explained what it was—the frank, pretty, round handwriting, perhaps, or perhaps its innocent expression; it is even possible that its fragrance attracted him. Most women's letters came to him scented with some perfume or other, and perfume was distasteful to him; but this particular note caught him back to

memories of his own pleasant childhood. Like the sheets and pillowcases of his early years at his grandmother's, it smelled elusively of English lavender, a fragrance that was at once freshly sweet and innocent.

Whatever it may have been, some quality had made it personal to him, and he had written a personal answer, one that—although he would have denied it to himself—invited a reply. It seemed scarcely credible that he, Peter Graham, could have fallen into an active correspondence with a casual girl of twenty, and yet it was a fact. He told himself at first that he was merely taking the opportunity to study the psychology of a mind of this type, but now he could hardly believe this to be the case. He seemed to be acting without his own volition. He was actually writing this girl love letters; he was searching each mail that came to him for letters of hers; and—inexplicable indiscretion—he had sent her one of the beautiful photographs that he had hitherto despised.

All this, from the ethics of his own standpoint, was bad enough, but his folly knew even greater depths; an honest correspondence would have been sufficiently indiscreet, but he had not been honest. He had been writing, not what he thought, but what seemed to be expected of him. Lying, even to a novice, is a habit capable of miraculous growth, and from one little seed of deceit will spring a beanstalk far greater than that of Jack's, one that not only will stretch to high heaven, but will also lie along the paths of earth, like a snare. Graham felt that he was constantly being driven forward by this growth of his own planting, and that the way he had come was far too tangled for any retreat. He had allowed himself to pose as something of a hero, and as a hero—idiotic as that figure in rational moments seemed to him—he must remain.

Spiritually cowering under Auntie Martha's eye, he struggled through his dinner to the very end with a fine nonchalance, and, with a muttered word of further work to do, slowly climbed the stairs to his room. But as soon as he had closed his door behind him, he eagerly switched on the light, and, still standing, ran rapidly through her letter.

He was torn with a variety of emotions. He was honestly ashamed of himself; he was jealous; and he felt that he had done an injury. For at last he had come to realize that he was in love, and he very much feared that he had persuaded the girl he loved to give her heart to the detestable lay figure that he himself had created and christened with his own name. To be sure, he had never told her that he loved her, nor had her letters said anything of the sort to him, but he felt that he had made her understand something of a feeling he had just begun to understand himself; and evidently she was not displeased. Her letters had always delighted him with their living and eager joyousness, but there was an exaltation in this one that was new and different, and that terrified and angered and thrilled him.

He had made a pretty hopeless mess of things, but by daylight he came to a decision. All he could do was to face the situation. Auntie Martha found him packing, when she called him to breakfast. At nine o'clock he took the train for the little Massachusetts town. He knew only as a postmark.

New York, as he left it, was warm with coming summer; the trees in Washington Square were in full leaf, and the whole city was redolent with the peculiar urban fragrance of late spring—the persistent breath of hidden, half-forgotten earth, the perfume of hothouse flowers, the faint, pungent scent of freshly sprinkled asphalt—an incongruous potpourri, which has,

nevertheless, as potent a magic to stir the blood as any sweeter pastoral harmony.

But as his train bore him northward, all the delicate process of spring rolled before him like a panorama turning backward; rich green grew more pale, the positive achievement of growth more delicate, until, when he reached his journey's end, he found himself in a country flushed pink with cherry blossoms, where new leaves were just unfolding, and new turf was sprinkled with violets and golden dandelions. The sun was warm, but the keen air blowing in from the sea was as full of cold flaws and currents—strange, vigorous rifts in its tempered languor—as the ocean that had freshened it.

Graham, driving to his hotel in a rickety "depot" hack, felt his courage rise, as if this breeze were actually blowing away his perplexities. In the hotel book he registered as Paul Graham, and felt that he had made a happy compromise. To the village it was an acceptable incognito, and it seemed to him that as he had once professionally dropped the "Paul," he was now privately reinstating it and dropping the "Peter"—his mission being strictly a private and personal one.

He had no definite plan of action; he realized that, as he sat in his bare, clean-swept, musty little room at the hotel. He had come upon an impulse, and he decided that he would leave his further actions to further impulses. But it was with a queer sense of elation and confidence that he fell asleep that night between the damp, bluing-stained sheets of his hard bed.

And it was with this same feeling of elation and expectancy that he awoke the next morning. The sunshine was pouring into his room, and from his windows, as he dressed, he could see, over the scattered houses of the village, a strip of dazzling, moon-white beach, where a joyous surf tumbled and

played, and curling lines of snowy foam advanced and retreated. Once a blue-bird shot obliquely down across his vision, and he welcomed it cheerfully as an omen of good fortune.

When he had finished breakfast—which, to his amusement, had actually included pie—he strolled out into the little village street, so cleanly swept with the salt wind, and so finely burnished with sunshine, with the vague intention of surveying the country. It seemed to him that an ocular acquaintance with her environment would help him to a further understanding of the girl he loved. Before he had gone twenty paces, he came face to face with the girl herself.

He recognized her immediately. She had sent him her photograph—in fact, it was she who had first suggested the exchange—and, although the effort of the country photographer had as grossly libeled her as his public presentment had flattered him, there was still enough of likeness to convince him beyond a doubt that this was actually she. She was as tall—just shoulder high—as he had imagined her, but there was a soft brilliance and vitality about her, an exquisite and lively coloring, of which he had formed no preconception. Her hair seemed soft and very fine, but it was more than dark—it was a true black; and beneath it her forehead was very white, a white as pure as the delicate pink of her cheeks, which was the pink of the cherry blossom. Her eyes, which, from the photograph, he had supposed black, he saw now were deep blue. Her lips were an eager red, sweetly and innocently modeled. He found her much more lovely than his best dreams.

She must have seen something of his pleasure and astonishment, some unusual quality of interest in his breathless, staring wonder; for the eyes she had raised in cool curiosity at his approach wavered and fell, discreetly

veiled by long lashes, and her color deepened. She glanced at him again, however, before he passed, this time with a sudden wonder and a sudden incredulity. He saw that she had not recognized him, but that some faint quality of recognition had disturbed and startled her.

He had come all this way to talk to her, but now, at a sudden impulse, he thrust aside his intended greeting and passed her in silence. With a supreme effort he kept himself from even glancing back, and strolled slowly along in the direction he had taken, until he came at last to the beach.

There, in the lee of a row of empty bathhouses, he sat down to reflect upon what he had done and upon what he intended to do. He was a methodical, rather than an erratic, genius. It was seldom that he acted upon impulse, but he had stepped out of his daily order of things impulsively, and he was disposed to lend a quickened hearing to the whisper of sudden determinations. Alice Fleming's failure to recognize him was a blow to his confidence that stirred his humor, and, as something altogether unforeseen, stimulated his imagination.

He had been greatly troubled by the picture he had painted of himself, by the ideal that he had allowed her to form, and it seemed as if opportunity fairly shouted to him now. He needed courage, a colossal impudence—but he thought he had it. He found her conception of him so much in his way that any risk he might run was proportionately small. He had registered at the hotel as Paul Graham, and Paul Graham he determined to remain.

He must, of course, admit relationship with Peter. There was enough likeness, he supposed, in the photograph to make that imperative. Very well, then; Paul should be Peter's obscure brother, with no reputation at all and no history, with nothing but his

personality, such as it was, to go upon. Paul should be, as nearly as Graham could make him so, his actual unofficial self, and Peter could keep his glories and his reputation and his glittering garment of lies—and a good riddance to him! It was a risk undoubtedly, but as undoubtedly was it a blessed relief. He would set about the business instantly.

As soon as he got back to the hotel, he wrote himself a pleasant and brotherly note of introduction. At three o'clock that afternoon he presented it. It was a lie, to be sure, but on the whole much more nearly the truth than anything he had ever written her about himself before.

The door of the Flemings' square, white house was opened to him by a long-wristed youngster, whom he knew must be her small brother, the humorous and incorrigible "Timmy," who more than once had found a place in her letters. It was only by conscious effort that Graham kept from calling him by name.

"Is Miss Fleming at home?" he asked.

"Uh—huh," Timmy answered. "Her and Alice are upstairs, dressmaking."

It was a reply that puzzled Graham until he remembered that in the local speech "Mrs." has much the sound of "Miss."

"I mean Miss Alice, of course," he hastened to explain.

Mrs. Fleming was doubtless a charming woman, and sooner or later he was, of course, to make her acquaintance, but at the moment, keyed up as he was for his interview, the margin by which he had escaped seemed perilously small.

"I have," he said very carefully and precisely, "a note of introduction to your sister, Miss Alice Fleming. Will you be kind enough to deliver it?"

Timmy's face expressed some bewil-

derment, and Graham laughed, and reached into his pocket.

"Take this letter upstairs to your sister," he said, and put his letter and a ten-cent piece into Timmy's hand.

"Yessir," said Timmy comprehensively, and took the stairs three at a time, while Graham found his own way into the sitting room.

It was a pleasant room, warmly furnished and unusually full of sunshine, and Graham felt that at any other time he would have enjoyed it. He had a strong feeling that even more or less formal rooms reflect something of the character of those who use them daily. Therefore, any room in Alice Fleming's house—a room that she might have swept, and probably had dusted, herself—should have been of very particular interest to him. Yet in all the twenty long minutes that he waited he was unable to fix his attention upon it.

For, once the letter had left his hands, his conscience had begun to trouble him. His little plot, which had seemed innocent enough as he had craftily composed the letter at the hotel, took on an increasingly dubious aspect. He had always supposed that deceit was distasteful to him, and now he found himself committed to a very solid deception, and was apprehensive as to the future depths into which it might lead him.

He was conscious, also, that he had acted abruptly and with little circumspection. It was very possible that Mrs. Fleming knew nothing of her daughter's correspondence with Peter Graham, and that the sudden appearance of Paul would be difficult to explain. He wished that he had sent his letter of introduction by mail. Perhaps, for all these dragging minutes, Alice Fleming was trying to explain that note of his to a surprised and indignant mother; perhaps, after all, it would be Mrs. Fleming who would come to talk with

him. It was with immeasurable joy and relief that he finally heard the foot of unmistakable twenty upon the stairs.

Her color was high with excitement, but her smile and her eyes were steady, and her light feet moved with a sure, sweet dignity. She was dressed as Graham had often pictured her, in a light, sprigged muslin belted with ribbon, a dainty justification of the long moments he had been kept waiting.

"I should have guessed it," she said, as she gave him her hand. "I saw you in the street this morning, Mr. Graham, and you quite startled me. I couldn't imagine why, then; but, of course, I know now that I saw some likeness to your brother."

"We are often mistaken for each other," said Graham.

Alice Fleming laughed. "You're not really at all alike," she said—"at least, not much alike." She blushed and hesitated, as if possibly she had said something discourteous. "Don't you always feel provoked at the stupid way people have of identifying you with somebody else, as if—you were cast in exactly the same mold? I mean that most people prefer to be individuals and not replicas." Her blush had deepened, and her distress was quite evident.

"I certainly feel so," said Graham hastily.

He was eager to help her, but he found, to his amazement, that her embarrassment hurt him. He must, he reflected, be more homely and ungainly than he had imagined, she so clearly wished to be nice and kind to him, and so clearly and involuntarily held him inferior to that idiotic, mechanical man he had created for her. He had little prevision of what this interview would be; he had not been sure that she would immediately prefer the actual Graham to the Graham he had given her, but at least he had been too complacent to dream that she would need to make a

conscious and charitable effort to cover her feeling of disappointment.

But there was a strong fighting strain in Graham, a militant capacity for accepting things as he found them, as the shortest route to making them better; the very magnitude of the task before him spurred him on to overtop by his own personality his own skillfully constructed romantic conception. He made his call a short one, for he felt that the situation called for serious reflection; but while he stayed, he put his best foot forward, and left with the feeling that at least he had made a beginning.

As it turned out, although he gave himself but little time for that serious reflection which he felt the situation required, he did proceed upon a definite plan—the simple strategy of abandoning strategy altogether—of being his natural, unvarnished self. He said things and did things as they occurred to him, and tried not to worry about their effect. And as he daily fell more in love with Alice Fleming, he became daily more certain that this plan was the best one. He risked a great deal, to be sure; he sacrificed many glittering attributes; he thought it possible that he was imperiling his whole future existence; but he came gradually to the conclusion that nothing could be more disastrous than a conquest by false pretenses and a subsequent existence spent in living up to them. His one deceit was that under which he had introduced himself.

This, however, led him into a strange sort of double life. He saw Alice Fleming daily—two or three times a day, if he could manage it—and every night before he went to bed he wrote to her, dating his letters in New York and signing himself Peter Graham. And almost daily he received letters from her, forwarded from his Washington Square address in envelopes that he sent Aunt Martha for the purpose.

He had this advantage over the av-

erage lover, or thought he had—in the letters to Peter he thought he read a barometer of the affairs of Paul. He always opened them with a strange feeling of guilt, as if he himself were almost convinced of his other identity, as if he were prying into the affairs of another man; but her letters had to be answered—he couldn't suddenly drop out of existence—and, since he must read them, he found them very illuminating.

For a while they were more and more about himself—about "Paul"; then at last came a time when she began to write less of him. Upon a morning when her letter ignored his existence altogether, he knew, with a beating heart, that his time had come. It was an unfair advantage; he never could have guessed it in any other way. He knew that she had come to know him, he knew that by now they really were good friends, but for all her youth and inexperience, for all her impulsive letters to Peter, face to face, by woman's ancient heritage, she managed to veil the true secrets of her heart. But when he saw that she was becoming reluctant to mention Paul to Peter, he caught up his hat, found a flower for his button-hole, and went in search of her.

Clairvoyantly he passed the Fleming front door and circled the house until he came to the garden behind it, and there, quite as he had expected, he found her.

His heart leaped at the sight of her. She was bareheaded in the bright sunshine, and the old-fashioned garden rioted in bloom all about her.

"Good morning!" she called to him. "Come and help me with the roses." She held up for his inspection a little, shallow basket already half full of flowers.

Graham thought that he had never seen a picture as lovely. He walked very slowly down the garden path toward her, stepping softly, as if he had

come into enchanted country, where fairy beauties might vanish at the snapping of a twig or the crunch of a pebble.

He had known exactly what he was going to say to her, but he found, when he stood beside her, that he had forgotten his phrases. He put out his hand and touched the roses in her basket, and said that they were beautiful. His mind was full of little, broken sentences which eluded him when he tried to grasp them. His play lovers had often said fine things—the poorest of them had always been able to stammer some sort of avowal, at least; but he, himself, to whom words were a profession, when he wanted most to speak, found himself standing silent and motionless. Strangely enough, his silence seemed to say the words his tongue refused.

"Is anything the matter?" Alice Fleming asked; but he knew that she had mysteriously guessed exactly what was the matter.

"Tell me, what is it?" she said, and, gravely enough, she put her hand lightly upon his arm.

Then he found his tongue, and asked her.

"Paul, dear," she said later—just how much later only the birds in the garden knew—"there is something you have to do, you know."

"Yes," Graham admitted, in a panic. "I know it. Do you want me to ask her right away?"

"Her? Oh, mother, you mean? There's plenty of time for that. She—well, I happen to know she quite approves of you. This is much more serious. You have simply got to write to Peter."

"Why don't you write to him yourself?"

In justice to Paul, it must be admitted that he said this guiltily. He wanted very much to see what she

would say about him, even at the risk of making his final confession more difficult.

"I shall write to him, of course," said Alice, with dignity, "but I think the first word should come from you. Come, you had better get it over with. You can write in the library, and I shall sit and watch you."

With a firmness that argued great future benefits for him, she led him to the house, banished the outraged Timmy from a comfortable reading position on his stomach in the middle of the library floor, and set out pens and paper.

"What shall I write?" asked Graham.

"The truth, of course. As gently as possible," she added.

"Humph!" said Graham, and, with her eye upon him, set to work. He wrote rapidly, for he was impatient to be done:

DEAR PETER: I have stolen a march upon you. Alice Fleming has promised to marry me. I can guess what your emotions will be. She is the sweetest, dearest, loveliest

He paused, and turned apprehensively, to find her looking over his shoulder.

"That isn't fair," he said.

"That," said Miss Fleming, stepping back out of reach, "is a most impossible and heartless letter."

"Heartless?" Graham asked.

Miss Fleming blushed. "To your brother, I mean. It won't do at all."

"It's the best I can do," said Graham softly. "You write him. I'm sure he'd rather hear from you, anyway."

"Very well, then. Let me have your chair; you can watch, if you like."

When she had settled herself to her satisfaction, she wrote:

DEAR PETER: I hope you will be happy in learning that I am going to marry your brother Paul. There, I have said it, and it has been very hard for me to say; for you and I, although we have never seen each

other, have got to be such good friends that—well, all I can do is to talk straight out in this letter to you. I thought for a long time that I was in love with you, and imagined that you cared for me a little bit. If you have cared for me, you must manage somehow to forgive me, although I don't know why you should; nor can I explain to you so that I can make you understand why things have happened to me as they have. But of course you know Paul and understand him, so perhaps you can see a little, although you two are so different. He has none of your distinction, and certainly nothing of your brilliance. At times he is positively stupid, but—

"Oh, come, now!" Graham interrupted, reaching out and taking the pen away from her. "Is that what you call a proper letter?" He suspected that he was being teased, but he was a little hurt, nevertheless. "I don't think it will please Peter any more than mine."

"Perhaps," said Alice Fleming, "you are right. Auntie Martha says that he has a very sensitive nature. She told me—"

"Auntie Martha!" cried Graham, springing to his feet. "When did you ever see her?" There was actual terror in his eyes.

"Sit down here beside me," said Miss Fleming quietly. "No—turn your head so that I can look at you. I saw her, my dear goose, my dear villain, over a week ago— You remember, perhaps, that I was called out of town? Really, I don't see why I should ever forgive you. You almost made me believe that there was something abnormal about me, for I was quite certain that I loved Peter—I always have been certain, in spite of that beautiful photograph of his, and a rather too clever way he has of writing—and I was equally certain that I loved you. Never mind exactly why. It was an impossible situation. I decided that I must be fair with Peter, too, so I went to see him about it—and found Auntie Martha. She told me where Peter was." She paused accusingly.

Graham hung his head. "Did she tell you anything else?"

Alice laughed. "A great deal more; I think she liked me. She said that you were the most wonderful man in the world, and—and I must try to get you to come to your meals on time."

Graham knew that he was forgiven, but he asked her, as he had asked her more than once that afternoon: "Do you love me?"

"My dear Peter Paul," she said, "you don't deserve it, but I am quite perfectly in love with both of you!"



THE LITANY OF ROSES

FOR that my roses knew the scathe,
 For women writ in silver rime,
 I thought me but a woman wraith,
 A dead leaf on the winds of time.
 Yet gallantly, with head unbowed,
 With fingers deft as any fay's,
 From flax, silk fine, I wrought a shroud,
 For the gay comrade of my days.

I swathed him in it, fold on fold,
 And set a candle at his head,
 Then over him, so wan and cold,
 The litany of roses said.
 I scanted naught, from April's flower,
 Thorny and pale, a rose's ghost,
 To red, red blooms of royal dower,
 That dare the falling of the frost.

"Pray, roses all, for love in death!"
 My heart said if I spake no word;
 Sudden I felt a catching breath—
 Love in his cerements strongly stirred.
 "Love and his rose die not of frost,"
 He laughed within his sheltered close—
 For—you had passed and lightly tossed
 Within my hand a red, red rose.

MARTHA McCULLOCH-WILLIAMS.



A PLEASANT, drowsy, noon-day quiet had descended upon the country town of Sleepy Hollow. The few carts still in the streets crawled along at a walk. The drivers were for the most part asleep, their heads nodding and the reins almost falling from their limp grasp. The sun blazed down upon the parched pavements. Blinds, snowy white in the fierce glare of the sun, were drawn down over the windows of the shops in the high street. Outside the inn lay a dog, stretched full length against the wall. Its tongue hung out, and its sides heaved with its panting breaths.

The sun seemed to shine upon a deserted city. In the old, covered-in market place there was no sign of life. The baskets of vegetables arranged in rows, the stalls on which were piled many different kinds of fruit, were alone and unguarded. Peace had laid its soft hand upon the place.

Suddenly there came into sight a young man, tall and athletic. He turned out of a side street. He was extremely well dressed, and he carried a small leather case. He sauntered along, a little smile twisting the corners of his mouth, looking about him with an appreciative eye, as if delighted with the rustic peace and beauty of the sleeping town. Who could this man be? What was this obvious gentleman doing in this out-of-the-way place? He

took off his straw hat and passed a silk handkerchief over his face, with a smile at the sun. Perhaps he was an artist, a painter of quiet landscapes. He walked as if he were strolling down Wall Street. What could be his business in Sleepy Hollow? Perhaps this delightfully good-looking young man, with his fresh, open face, was a college man on his vacation.

He stopped outside a jeweler's shop and peered in. The array of costly things must have pleased him, for his smile increased. He glanced to right and left, and entered the shop.

Behind the counter sat a young girl with beautifully dressed hair. She was reading a yellow-backed novel. As the shop door opened, she rose and came forward.

The young man raised his hat, with a flash of teeth. Could it be that he was in love with her, and had come down to this peaceful spot to see her? No, this was not the case. He asked her politely, almost humbly, if he might look at some diamonds. The girl, a charming young thing of some twenty summers, appreciated his politeness and led the way across the shop. She opened the door of a large iron safe and brought out a tray shining with precious stones. She placed this upon the counter. The gentleman laid his leather case beside it. He turned to her, evidently to ask some question, and— What in Heaven's name was

he doing? His hands shot out and closed like a vise round the soft neck of the young girl. Was he mad? Was he— Ugh! The man let go, and she dropped limply in a heap.

He was a murderer!

Taking no further notice of the poor young girl, he turned to the diamonds. He opened his leather case and emptied the contents of the tray into it. Then, hurrying to the open safe, he cleared that. He was not only a murderer, but a thief. Several thousand dollars' worth of jewels were safely in his case when something made him look up.

At the back of the shop, open-mouthed with amazement, unable to believe his eyes, stood the girl's employer. The young man, the murderer, caught up his case and snapped it shut. He dashed out of the shop into the peaceful, sleeping street, and ran down it at full speed.

The jeweler, coming to his senses, dashed through the shop in pursuit. The body of the young girl, lying huddled and motionless, stopped him as if he had been shot. He stooped quickly and placed his hand on her heart. His eyes filled with horror. He rose again and ran out into the sunlit street, after the fleeing man with the leather case.

As if by magic, the town woke up. In an instant the soft hand of peace was dashed aside. From shops, houses, side streets, from everywhere and nowhere, people came running. Out they came, helter-skelter—policemen, civilians, butcher boys, tradesmen, girls on bicycles, and men in carts. And all turned and followed after the jeweler and the murderer. It was as if the Pied Piper had blown upon his flute. Sleepy Hollow had suffered a rude awakening.

The young man turned his head for an instant and quickened his pace. As he did so, a policeman, summoned by one of the pursuers, dashed out of a side turning, immediately in front of

the murderer. Both crashed down upon the pavement. The constable lay there, half stunned. The young man, possessed apparently of a charmed life, sprang up unhurt, picked up his bag, and disappeared down the side street.

The crowd, like fierce bloodhounds upon the scent, turned the corner after him. They were only a few short yards behind. A good spurt, and—

A motor car stood at the top of the side street, its engine throbbing. The murderer ran straight for it. The chauffeur was leaning out of his seat on the other side of the car, chucking a young girl under the chin. His bantering remarks were suddenly interrupted by a violent blow on the back of his head. He toppled out into the girl's arms, and they both rolled in the dust.

With a white, set face, the murderer thrust in the clutch and opened the throttle. The car dashed forward, leaving the crowd frantic with rage. A little girl trotted across the road. Without swerving to avoid her, the murderer deliberately kept straight on. The car crashed into her and passed over her body. This fresh horror excited the crowd to madness. They ran hither and thither wildly. The jeweler and three policemen burst into a garage a few yards down the street. Without explanation, they tumbled into two cars. The chauffeurs, with determined faces, were in a second racing along the road, far in excess of the speed limit, after the already distant murderer.

He was a good driver. He dodged in between carts, without an inch to spare, and ruthlessly ran down the dogs that sprang out to bark at him. In the little oval glass at the side of the wheel he saw the two pursuing cars. His lips moved in a curse. They were catching up with him. He pumped at his horn violently as a policeman stepped bravely into the middle of the road with up-raised hand to check his terrific speed.

The murderer held straight on, and the policeman leaped back in the nick of time, wiping his forehead with a shaking hand.

Then he turned, with a start. The racing car was lying in a shower of broken glass, half in a shop window. It had skidded on a tram line, and crashed into the plate-glass front of a milliner's shop. Was the man killed? No. Clutching his case, the murderer picked himself up, glanced wildly at the pursuing cars, which were stopping only a yard or two away, and dashed into the wrecked milliner's. The shop-girls scattered, terrified, as he ran into them and through the shop, disappearing through the back door.

Indescribable confusion ensued. The jeweler and the three policemen followed in hot pursuit, signaling to the girls to stop the murderer. Behind the shop was a little, square garden, adjoining a row of others, all the same size. The murderer took this in at a glance. He ran at the first wall and jumped.

On the other side, two men and two women were having lunch at a small, square table. Suddenly, to their horror, a man crashed down upon it from over the wall. One of the women was knocked backward, with the table and all its contents on top of her. The others fell over from fright. It was as if a bomb had burst among them. They picked themselves up in time to see the cause of this damage disappear over the other wall—and received another shock.

The jeweler and the three policemen dropped, one by one, into the garden, and, without a word or look at the be-dazed inhabitants, vaulted over the farther wall in pursuit of the murderer. They were handicapped by their heavy uniforms, while the murderer, who had long since lost his hat, had only his precious case to hinder him, and jumped the walls like a champion hurdler.

In the next garden, an elderly gentleman lay peacefully sleeping in a straw chair, with a handkerchief over his face. He was old and corpulent, and this had been his habit for the last twenty years. The murderer leaped out from the first garden, and alighted on the old man's stomach. He was knocked violently to the ground. The murderer, almost exhausted by the force with which he struck the earth, had not strength enough to jump out of the garden. He staggered across, and climbed over the fence with an effort. As the pursuers came into the garden that he had just left, the old man did not move. He lay there, stunned and unconscious.

The next wall was too high for the murderer to get over. With a terrible effort, he turned and ran up the steps of the house to which the garden belonged. His pursuers were already on the wall. He burst in at the door.

Seated around the table were an elderly man and his wife and family. The two sons and the father rose to their feet at the sudden entrance of the gasping murderer, who dashed around the table and tried to get out of the door. The two sons sprang to it, speechless with anger.

The murderer leaned against the wall for a moment. Then he put his hand to his pocket and whipped out a revolver. The wife covered her face with her hands and fainted. The jeweler and the policemen dashed up the garden steps. The murderer fired at one of the two sons. He missed, and fired again. The lad sank to the ground. Again he fired, and the white-haired father fell to the floor.

The policemen dashed round the table with drawn truncheons. Twice again the trigger was pulled, and two of the pursuers fell, writhing, upon the carpet.

Before the others could close with him, the murderer placed the barrel of

his weapon into his mouth and pulled the trigger. The policeman and the jeweler recoiled, horrified. The murderer's eyes glazed; the revolver fell from his hand; and slowly his body doubled under him. He lay in a crumpled heap—dead.

frenzied notes of the old piano died away. The man with a dirty collar began to play the national anthem as the audience filed out into the city streets.

"I wonder how they work these moving pictures?" said the girl.

Her friend laughed.

"Heaven only knows!" he said. "I hope it's stopped raining."

The lights were turned up; the last



THE SAND PILE

THE little square on our street
Is thronged again,
As May spreads out her sunshine's gold
For love of men.
But there are folk who never seek
This park of ours,
"Because," they say, "there are no trees,
Or grass, or flowers."
And they go proudly elsewhere
To find their flowers.

It's true—where greening grass should be
Is dust a-blowing;
And where, in other finer squares,
Are fountains flowing,
With gaudy flowers of every hue
Resplendent made,
A sand pile only we possess,
Unblessed by shade.

But in the sand pile children play
Long, laughing hours,
And grow and blossom with the May,
These babes of ours!
These little ones of ours!

I would not be so blind as they
Who, passing, say:
"There are no flowers!"

BONNIE R. GINGER.



XVIII.—THE CARAVAN

Through the Valley of Love I went,
In the loveliest spot to abide,
And just on the verge where I pitched my tent,
I found Hate dwelling beside.

* * * * *

But lo, where I flung myself prone, couched Love,
Where the shadow threefold fell. —Pippa Passes.

THE orchestra was playing "Aloha," and two pretty, dark girls at a table near Mrs. Carpenter looked up with kindling smiles. Evidently they hailed from Honolulu. At another table sat a man and a woman, mutually absorbed, hardly touching course after course of delicious food, but now and again drinking to each other in the pale-gold California wine. One man, sitting alone, beckoned to his waiter:

"I want my olives fixed in a certain way. You take some oil, and——"

The waiter smiled confidentially as he nodded.

"I used to work in the Bohemian Club, sir!" he murmured, and straightway vanished, to produce a Lucullian *hors d'œuvre*.

Pippa was squandering a long, comfortable hour in one of the oldest and most famous restaurants of the city—the one that is named for a popular family pet—and she was lunching very

well and very leisurely. She had now seen, in the space of twenty minutes, Hawaiians, Spaniards, Frenchmen, Americans, and many other races. No such mixed gathering had ever met her eyes except on the Continent, and she was enormously interested.

Philippa Carpenter was making friends with San Francisco; not with the people—save at a distance—but with the town as a whole. She had been utterly alone in the Wonder City for a fortnight, but she was not lonely. She had one or two acquaintances in San Francisco, but she had no desire to look them up. Somehow the idea of tea at the Golf Club, dinners in comfortable, home dining rooms, motor expeditions to the redwoods, week-ends at Menlo, and so on, seemed out of key with her mood. She wanted to assimilate fully the curious, new flavor and enchantment of this place. Wherein was it different from other cities? She could not analyze the thing, but every morning, as she woke to the blazing

blue and gold of a perfect California day, and every night as she got out warm things to protect herself from the cold sea fog that rolled, in great puffs, from the ocean, she seemed to understand it a little better.

She had made friends with Paris, with Petersburg, with New York, with London, with Washington. Here, she appreciated, was a city with just as definite an individuality as any of them. It wasn't simply that it was the Golden West. Los Angeles had been that, and Los Angeles, garden of magic as it was, had never gripped her like this. Something seemed to be trying to tell her something—to give her some message, or perhaps it was a command. Imperious cities—and San Francisco, in spite of its cosmopolitan range, is naturally imperious—are prone to giving commands.

She loved it. She was growing used to putting on a flannel kimono for breakfast; to donning her lightest linen suit for luncheon in the tropical noon; to taking her heaviest coat over her arm when she went to walk in the afternoon. She had met more than one woman, after sundown, wearing a summer frock and a fur coat! She was also growing to love the characteristic food of San Francisco: the cold boiled crabs; the shrimp salad—huge bowls of it; the hot tamales that did not come out of cans, but were cooked fresh and delectable every hour or so; the ripe olives; the monstrous, delicious fruits; the curious, Chinese dishes; and the light, tingling wines of the country, in which seemed imprisoned some of its sunlight and richness.

Most of all, she was fascinated by the odd spell of adventure that charged the atmosphere. Here, at the gateway to those mysterious seas that spread to the rising sun, were to be found all the glamour and romance of the Orient, flavored and spiced with the American tang of adventurous zeal. Far from

robbing the Eastern magic of its witchery, it added to it. The sharp dash of commercialism only heightened the savor; even smuggling catches a fresh sparkle from business competition. And if one studied the Celestial merchants as they unloaded their heiroglyphiced bales and boxes on the wharves and pondered over mysterious invoices, one might get some picturesque side lights on, for instance, the suffering of the Chinese importers since the Mexican coinage went out.

All these things had brushed Pippa's very sleeve, and, with her instant recognition of the fantastic, the romantic, the interesting, she had gone about raptly, picking up a thousand tiny episodes that made up a mosaic as full of color as any put together in Italy. For this was no mere American city; it was a harbor for inscrutable aliens, with faces dark or tawny or parchment yellow, who drifted silently through the streets, watching, always watching, with unfathomable black eyes. It was the hiding place of a hundred thousand mysteries and secrets; the birthplace of a hundred thousand marvelous projects; the tomb of as many, or twice as many, dead lives.

Strangely enough, though Pippa had wandered about the town at all times and in all neighborhoods, she had done no regular "sight-seeing." She had clung to the back of the car seat as she had plunged precipitously down the terrible hills that form part of the regular cable-car lines in that strange town. She had gazed, almost in a dream, upon the sweep of the city that lay beyond and below, and had closed her eyes dizzily as she had dropped down—down into—was it a bottomless pit? No; only Chinatown! She had poked about the Celestial quarter, buying jade and mandarin coats and sniffing the queer smells that issued from the tiny, dusty-windowed provision shops—shops that displayed an assortment of dingy ob-

jects, mostly on strings, that looked like anything in the world rather than food. She had hunted up funny little restaurants where it ought to have been highly improper for a woman to go alone, but where she had been accepted quite as a matter of course. She had lightly skirted the Barbary Coast, quite realizing that without an escort her view of it must be most circumscribed; and she had done a great number of things that were, to a woman of her type, deeply interesting. But she had never seen the Seal Rock, and she had never been to the Presidio!

It was just as she was paying her check at the illustrious little restaurant that she overheard a plump gentleman, who looked like a professional tourist, say briskly to a tired, thin lady and a snub-nosed girl:

"No, my loves, we must lose no time. If we are to sail this week, we must see all there is to see here first. This afternoon we must drive out to the Presidio, and have a look at the Golden Gate."

"Have a look at the Golden Gate!" Pippa nearly laughed outright. Then she considered. She was in a worse class than they; she had forgotten that there was such a thing as the Golden Gate! She had been close to it for two weeks, and it had never even occurred to her to "take a look" at it!

That very afternoon she hired a taxicab and spun out there. To go to the Presidio—say those who know and love it—means to pass through the loveliest park in the world. California green has a spectrum all its own; there is a yellow-green and a blue-green and a green that is almost purple-brown, and a number of gradations of old rose and sea color and emerald, and so many other shades that no mere mortal can properly grade them. No mere mortal save one, that is. Pippa knew that the man who had planned the green color scheme of the Presidio grounds had

made a complete study and art of it. Now, as she glided swiftly between the blue-black eucalyptus trees, accented darkly against the paler and more sunshiny tints of the foliated trees, she frowned at herself for not having come before. The silent message, whatever it was, that she had been hearing in her ears for a week past, sounded louder now. What was it that the spirit of San Francisco was trying to say to her? Something told her that she was close to translating it at last.

It was while she was standing by one of the great guns of the Presidio, watching the varied boats go by through the splendid portal of the Golden Gate, that her heart gave a leap of certainty. She knew now what San Francisco was saying to her! She—the imperious, the fantastic city—was ordering her out upon the trail again. While she had loitered here, trying to come into more intimate touch with her hostess, the town herself had been pushing her onward.

"This is no place for purposeless waiting," San Francisco was saying. "Either you must become one of my own mercenaries and adventurers, or you must go on elsewhere in search of excitements of your own. Go, then, not in peace, but in restlessness; and I will so—and so only—give you my blessing!"

A whiff from the rich California undergrowth came to her, sharpened by the chilly wind that suddenly swept the grounds of the Presidio. The evening mist was rolling in across the harbor. Some soldiers were singing in barracks, and the rough, ringing voices came to Pippa like a fresh impetus to action.

She looked at her watch and walked quickly back to where her taxi was waiting on the highest curve of the roadway that overlooks the most beautiful harbor in the world.

"I want to go to a steamship-booking office," she said.

The chauffeur stared. "Yes, ma'am! Which one?" he asked, pardonably puzzled.

"Any one," said Mrs. Carpenter casually. "I want to sail on the first steamer that goes to an Eastern port."

"Yes, ma'am," said the chauffeur again, wondering secretly if he ought not to drive her instead to the nearest asylum.

However, he took her to the booking office of one of the great Pacific lines, and she went in to a place bewilderingly full of pictures of boats, colored maps, large-sized sailing lists, and persuasive advertisements of bargains in round-the-world trips.

Her head whirled. And when a scowling young man demanded where she wanted to book to, she responded helplessly: "I haven't the slightest idea. Something Eastern," much as she might have said: "Something in the silk line, if you happen to have it!"

The scowling young man also thought her mad. When a beautiful, red-haired lady, wearing an exceedingly expensive violet gown and a huge bunch of rare flowers, blows into your office and explains vaguely that she wants to go somewhere in the East, but doesn't care where, you may reasonably conclude that there is something the matter with her. However, he pushed a huge heap of folders toward her and left her to get tangled up in them as much as she wished.

"Oh, dear!" murmured Mrs. Carpenter in dismay, as she fingered them with daintily gloved fingers. But she got no help. The scowling young man had turned to scowl at somebody else.

This was a stout, comfortable-looking little man, with an air of bustling and conscious importance. Pippa recognized him at once as the energetic traveler who had wanted to "take a look at the Golden Gate."

"I want to go to Cairo," he said briskly.

As the scowling youth reached for a fresh supply of folders, Philippa became conscious of two quick, yet weary, sighs close to her. Turning, she saw an old man, evidently an Oriental, though his clothes were American, and very shabby. He limped as he walked, and even when he stood, leaned heavily upon a stick. His dark face was wrinkled and anxious. He kept looking, in a worried, yet eager, way from the plump tourist to Mrs. Carpenter, as if he were searching eternally for some one or something. Philippa thought that she had never seen eyes so full of question.

As the busy little gentleman started once more for the door, carefully folding up some long, colored slips, the old man limped hurriedly near to him.

"Effendi," he besought, in a low, trembling voice, "one moment! The effendi goes to Egypt?—to Cairo?"

The other stared.

"The Nile, my good fellow, the Nile!" he said impatiently.

The Arab seemed to choke down an eager gasp.

"Then," he hastened on, "perhaps the effendi would want a *suffragi*—a personal servant? One who knows the language? I—I would go very cheap, effendi, and I know the country. And I *must* get to my own land!"

"Nonsense!" said the plump little man, in a matter-of-fact way. "I have my own manservant, and a courier and dragoman engaged on the other side. Very sorry, my good man, but it's out of the question. Here are two bits for you." And he held out a quarter.

The Oriental drew back.

"I did not ask for money, effendi," he said, with the simple dignity of the East.

The plump traveler raised his eyebrows, shrugged his chubby shoulders, and trotted briskly off.

Philippa saw the old man's head droop, and a look of bitter disappointment darken the darkness of his face. Impulsively she spoke to him:

"I'm afraid you are very much disappointed!"

The man's eyes—black and sorrowful—were lifted swiftly to hers. A faint light, as of hope, gleamed in his.

"Madame does not know of some other traveler, perhaps?"

He spoke humbly, yet insistently, as if something within him were urging him past his native respect and unobtrusiveness, on toward some goal greatly to be desired.

"Where is it that you wish to go?" she asked gently.

"To Egypt!" It was a sort of subdued cry.

A party of young women had come in, and were trying to talk to the scowling booking clerk all at once. No one paid the slightest attention to Mrs. Carpenter or to the Arab.

"And you want to go so much?"

"It is not that I want to go, madame," he said, sighing heavily. "I am an old man, and all of my people are dead. All left to me are two-grandsons, whose father was my son, and they are in this land. But there is that which I must carry to Egypt, or send by a trusty messenger; and I am poor, and may not hire a carrier. Honest men, madame knows, cost money!"

Perhaps it was this unconsciously cynical aphorism that appealed to Pippa; perhaps it was the fantastic quality of the idea that had come to her; perhaps it was nothing but genuine pity for the old man. At all events, she gave a little nod as if in decision, and walked up to the scowling young man.

"I want a stateroom on the first steamer bound for the Red Sea."

The clerk, without even looking at her, named a price.

"When does the boat sail?"

"To-morrow. Three p. m."

She paid, stuffed a wad of printed paper into her purse, and addressed the Arab:

"Come to see me at the Hotel Bellevue to-night. I am going to Egypt, and I will take your message, or whatever it is you want to send."

He stood humbly before her in her dainty little drawing-room, looking more lame and old and shabby than ever, but Pippa gently told him to sit down. She had been packing, and softly colored fabrics of all sorts were flung about on chairs and lounges. She had left her maid behind when starting for the Western coast; she often did when in search of adventures. Lucille hated adventures.

The old man looked about him wonderingly.

"Allah!" he murmured, with unfeigned piety. "This is the garden of Jamshid the Persian, of whom I have read! These are not stuffs such as the *feringi* wear, but rainbows and flowers of many colors."

Philippa smiled.

"You say very pretty things," she said. "Please tell me your name, and who you are."

"My name, madame, is Mohammed Ali, one-time camel driver of the fastest mail camel in all Egypt—Fatma, who could outfly the wind itself, a beast as far from the common pigs that the Bisharin ride as is the sun from a candle flame, or the sword from the tent peg!"

Pippa had learned to let men tell their tales in their own way, so she merely nodded appreciatively, and let him talk on without interruption. He spoke slowly, with a slight accent, but in the perfect, if rather stilted, English peculiar to naturalized Orientals.

"It is the ruby of the mosque at Muktar; a pigeon-blood ruby of great value and great size. Men said its

wonderful color came from the human blood that had been spilled for it; that for every fresh life cut down, the ruby won a new and more brilliant crimson. This I do not know, but I know well that many have died for the ruby of Muktar. Many have tried to win it, but I—I alone dared to steal it! Yes, I plucked it, as one might pluck a flower, and, hiding it in my burnoose, I rode away upon Fatma.

"That was a long and terrible journey, madame. A day and a night we traveled, and a day and a night we were followed. They shot often, those who followed, and I must ride with my head upon Fatma's hump. One—two shots passed through this leg of mine, but by the grace of Allah, Fatma suffered no hurt, and we sped on over the sands, like a cloud between the earth and the sun. The heat grew more and more fierce, and the ruby seemed to burn into my heart, for it was just there that it lay hidden. But at last they that followed were far behind, and we rested in the shade of some gum trees and palms. I drank from my half-empty water jar, and slept. And when I woke, it was night, and I knew that all was well with me, and that I was safe, since none had come upon us in my sleep. So we went on, though more slowly. But at the end of that great journey, Fatma knelt down and died, and I wept for her, for she was a camel beyond price.

"That was thirty years ago, madame; and yet I have not been able to get rid of the jewel, or of the curse it brought me. I must restore it to the mosque whence it came, and then, perhaps, with much prayer to Allah the Merciful, I may be forgiven in my old age. Until then my house will know no happiness, neither riches nor health. This has been borne in upon me through the years. Thrice have I tried to sell the jewel for gold, but each time has some calamity fallen upon me! Or worse,

upon one of these my son's sons. *Shallah!* It is the will of Allah. For but lately I have been warned in a dream that while I hold the stolen treasure, I shall never know joy, but that if I return it to its rightful place, I may die without fear, and my grandsons may live in plenty.

"I may not return to my lost country; it is not for me; nor am I strong enough, nor young enough, to travel so far. But you, madame, you will listen to the silence of the desert, and see the colors that the sky has at sundown. I would I were you, madame—and yet I would not! For I am old, and I doubt not that the dream I dream of it would, after all these years, prove untrue at the last! Allah is good! As we pass on to the farther end of life, we are given many dreams and ghosts for company."

Pippa wondered a little at the phraseology of the man, till she remembered that even the camel drivers of the Far East may have an aptitude for the metaphysical, the indirectly poetic, the picturesque. The little sentence about the ghosts and dreams stayed with her persistently.

"And the ruby?" she asked.

"Will madame look upon it? See—it is here."

He held it out as he spoke, a splendid flash of winy glitter that held the eyes like a mystic flame or a crimson star fallen from heaven. Pippa gasped.

"And it is that," she said, "that I am to carry to Muktar?"

"It is that!" cried Mohammed Ali fervently. "And if madame will but say a prayer for my wicked soul—a prayer to Allah that I may now begin life again—"

"A prayer to Allah!" repeated Mrs. Carpenter, slightly abashed. Then she added quickly and gently: "Of course, Mohammed Ali; I will say a prayer to Allah for you in the mosque at Muktar."

"Madame," said the Arab earnestly, "if you will go to the house of Yusuf-Amid, the perfume seller in the bazaar of Muktar, you will be welcomed and housed as one of his own. Tell him that I, Mohammed Ali, the camel driver and his friend, sent you, and he will give you his best wine and rarest fruits. If he doubts, say to him these lines which we learned together once, while we ate ripe figs."

He quoted something in a strange, but musical, tongue; then haltingly translated:

"That which we know will come,
Allah withdraws from us;
That which we know nought of,
He gives us as our fate."

He rose from the brocaded chair on which he had been incongruously sitting. The dignity of the aged, crippled figure was in some obscure way most beautiful.

"May madame know joy and peace," said Mohammed Ali, driver of the superlative Fatma. "May Allah reward her for returning the Muktar ruby by giving her some great good of which she does not know!"

He touched his forehead, lips, and breast in profoundest homage, and limped in shambling fashion from the room, to begin life over again, at sixty-five, and with a shattered body.

The next day, Pippa Carpenter stood on the deck of the great steamboat that plied between the coast and the purple East. They were passing out through the Golden Gate, that incomparable portal of possibilities. Behind her throbbed San Francisco; she seemed still able to smell the strange, aromatic scent of California trees and flowers and Chinese joss sticks and opium, even though her nostrils were filled, actually, with nothing but the salt, clean tang of the breeze-swept ocean.

Oh, blue past belief! A blue as vital and fresh as the sky itself; not the

painted, shining blue of the Mediterranean, but deep and clear and strong of tint, threaded by flashing white, and darkened by swirling sea winds. It was late afternoon, and soon the evening chill of the coast would rise to meet the sharpening cold of the outer ocean. Pippa turned to go below in search of a coat.

And—he stood there.

It was the man whom she always thought of as "the wanderer"; whom she had seen but once, yet whose face was as familiar to her as that of an old friend; whose voice rang often in her ears; whom—as she now realized—she had always counted on meeting again some time. He stood there, big, brown-faced, keen-eyed; a man past his first youth, with lines of bitterness as well as of sweetness around his firm mouth. And the look in his face was like a welcoming fire upon a hearthstone.

"I knew it!" was what he said; and he took both her hands in his.

All the blood in Pippa's face had fled to her heart. She was dead white, but her purple-blue eyes burned brilliantly, and her breath came fast.

"It's you!" she said simply. "And I ought to have known you'd be here—or somewhere!"

"Where are you going?" he demanded authoritatively, still grasping her hands.

"To Cairo first, and then through the desert to Muktar. I'm going on an errand!"

His eyes sparkled.

"A secret mission? Because I, too, am headed for the desert."

Pippa was looking up at him as directly as a child.

"Yesterday," she said wonderingly, "I didn't even know where I was going. I couldn't imagine why fate had decided on Egypt for me. Now—I know."

The light in his eyes softened to tenderness.

"Beautiful lady," he whispered, "have you ever heard of the once-glorious city of Timbuktu? Men went to it by caravan, crossing vast wastes of sands, seeing no spot of green, feeling no breath of coolness, suffering—sometimes dying—there under the sun. No hint was in all that journey of the revelation at the end of it. But suddenly, without warning, as if finding a great jewel set in rusty iron, they would come upon it—Timbuktu the Splendid! Lady, there are more caravan routes than those that lead across Sahara."

"And wonderful surprises other than ancient Timbuktu!" returned Philippa, in a very low voice.

Somehow such unembarrassed candor seemed natural between them. They were man soul and woman soul, meeting frankly, and understanding as instantly and as completely as the moon and the tide.

"Will you come with my caravan?" asked the wanderer.

Pippa turned her eyes from his and gazed out over the surge and shimmer of the sea. Already the fog that she had come to watch for was forming, soft as smoke, above the freshening, ruffled waves.

"I think I must travel with my own caravan," she said. "I have some ghosts in my retinue that I cannot lay."

"And why," asked the wanderer, "do you want to lay them?"

"Because," said Pippa, and her mind flashed back to the day when she had talked to a foolish girl of the ways in which ghosts are made, "because they are not, for the most part, happy ghosts. They represent everything that has made me what I am."

In a vague way she felt that he knew what she meant. Yet his answer came as gently as a strain of music:

"Then they must be good ghosts, and I should like to know them."

She thought of what Mohammed Ali had said of ghosts and dreams. She looked at the wanderer, but the tears rushed hotly to her eyes. She could not answer.

"You know," the man said, as gently as before, "nobody is what they have done—only what they are."

"Yes." Philippa knew that; she could not have lived otherwise.

"You do know that? Then why are you so unkindly disposed toward your ghosts? The ghosts that have shaped you, given you life and strength and character and the power to do many things."

"Very few things." It was partly pure humility, but more the strange, sweet wonder of having him reassure her against herself.

"The power to love, for instance," he rejoined with simplicity.

The fog was closing in, and there was no more shimmer upon the face of the waters. Pippa flung out her hands with a wild little gesture.

"You don't understand!" she said. "Men have loved me—a great many men. I have even loved men—a few. But the rest of my life has been waiting—waiting for something that could never be."

"Why not?" he asked.

"I tell you, you don't understand!" she repeated, with a choking breath. "I—I have been drawn to men for a thousand different reasons—pity, passion, friendship, respect, impulse! I cared once for a man who was divinely tender to me—and I tired of him. There was a man who hurt me, body and soul, whose every touch was fire and pain; I suppose I loved him for that. There was a boy who trusted me; a man who carried me off my feet; one at whose feet I could sit to learn wisdom; and one that I longed to rock in my arms like the baby I can never have! Oh, do you wonder—do you wonder that I walk with ghosts?"

"If I were ever happy enough to be your lover," said the man, "I should bless each and all of these for making you what you are. I should bless the suffering that gave you sight; the passion that gave you warmth; the tenderness that gave you sympathy and understanding. Wonderful lady, when you join the great caravan of the last years, these ghosts will travel with you and make the outward track less lonely."

"I have already joined that outgoing caravan," said Philippa Carpenter, with her eyes on the Pacific and the pressing mists. "I am leaving America to find something new and wonderful and—different."

"Come with me," he said quietly. "We'll strike across to Muktar first, and you can deliver your message, and then——"

"And then?" she asked. Her heart was beating with a cadence as new and hopeful as at the beginning of her restless life.

"Then?" said the wanderer. "Why, isn't the chief secret of hope in not knowing just what you are hoping for? Only—we'll go out with the great caravan together; and it won't be so lonely then, will it?"

The swift Pacific darkness was falling about them.

"No," whispered Pippa; "it won't be lonely then."

"See," said the wanderer, leaning on the rail. "We are sailing straight into the mist. It looks like a wall, yet we shall pass through it, on to undiscovered things, and to the caravan route that leads to more and still more happenings—adventures, if you will! On that route we shall know danger and disappointment, but now and then we shall rest in the green shadows of an oasis, or kneel before the red moon of the desert, or come unexpectedly upon the music of dancing girls in a Bedouin camp. It will be worth while—and we shall not be lonely."

Pippa's eyes widened as she, too, stared into the fog that seemed to her to symbolize the mysterious future. There was a light in her face—a glow and a fire as white as moon flame.

"And always," she breathed, "there is, beyond all these things, the Great Adventure, when we reach the end of the world!"

She faced him in the thickening dusk.

"Yes, I will go with you, wanderer! We will join your caravan, I and my ghosts!" said the woman with a past.





The Ugly Duckling

BY

ETHEL TRAIN



THE sea was riotous blue. On the opposite side of the house, away from the water, the close-cropped grass sparkled like an emerald. With her senses, Helen Page grasped all this; it was her heart that was out of tune with the brimming, sun-bathed world.

From the mirror on her dressing table, her image quietly confronted her, and she began to analyze it dispassionately as she made her toilet. It was the noncommittal face of a delicately attractive woman—a face that had lost none of the contours of youth. Helen was thirty-six, but no one would have guessed it. The strong sunlight held no terrors for her; there were as yet no crow's-feet for it to bring out, no wrinkles. Her figure was slim and graceful; simple gowns became her; she wore them always in the morning.

To-day, she chose one of violet linen, which accentuated the heavy, shimmering darkness of her hair. It did not argue vanity, she thought, that she dressed carefully to please herself. There was no one else whom she cared to please. She had no intimate friends, and John Page, her husband, had long since ceased to serve as a foil for her charms.

This was due to no direct fault of her own, but to the fact that the years had been less kind to him than to her. His hair was graying, and his waistcoats were showing an unmistakable

tendency to bulge outward. There was nothing romantic left about him. Years ago, people had designated them a good-looking couple. Now they spoke of Mrs. Page as a good-looking woman, and did not speak of poor John as anything at all. Not that he cared. He accepted nature's buffetings in good part, and laughed at the idea of making any attempt to gloss them over.

"What does it matter about *me*?" he always said. "*You're* the one they're after. By Jove, you don't look more than eighteen in that gown!"

And she would accept his homage impersonally, as a fraction of the homage of her world.

That she was without close ties of friendship was due to a mistake at the outset. She had begun by measuring every new acquaintance by the standards of the set into which she had been born, and discarding those who would not fit. She had sacrificed the best in life to a picayune provincialism. When her own daughter failed to conform, either spiritually or physically, to the ready-made pattern Helen had cut out, she was dissatisfied, not with the pattern, but with the girl.

Thus, at the threshold of middle age, she was in a sorry plight. She had striven consistently for the approval of society, and, having obtained it, had found that it left her cold. She had no enthusiasm for her husband, none for her children.

At eighteen she had been youthfully

in love. She had married almost at once, and before she was twenty she had thrilled to the stirrings of motherhood. There had been in her passionately eager acceptance of her condition much of the innocent anticipation of the child; something was going to happen; something altogether new and different; something fresh and wonderful. For hours at a time she had dreamed deliciously, less concerned with the sex of the expected one than with its possible personal attributes. Would it be dark or fair; would it have blue eyes or brown; would its hair wave loosely, like her own, or curl crisply in rings?

She had seen herself leading it, step by careful step, along the rough road of childhood, guiding it, a special providence, into a tender adolescence. When the baby had come, a girl, it had been perfectly bald. That had been the first blow.

In some doubt, Helen had bestowed upon her daughter the dignified name the dream child had worn in its female moments—Cornelia. At two, Cornelia's round, pink head had been sparsely covered with straight hair in patches, like a thatched roof in need of repair. At three, her independence had been already a marked characteristic. At four she had firmly declined to be led, preferring her own liberty of investigation.

Then Jack had come, about whom the chastened mother had dared form no opinion whatever. He had been a fine boy, but every one had been too busy with Cornelia to get much enjoyment out of him.

Finally had arrived Dotsie, trim and dainty from her cradle. But Helen had had one lesson; never again would she allow her imagination to run riot. Who could tell what transformation the years might create? She was not going to be fooled again.

Cornelia was now fifteen.

At this moment she burst in, closely followed by the other two.

"*Hel-lo, muzz!*" she greeted, and squatted heavily upon the floor.

Dotsie began running busily up and down behind her mother's chair.

Brush in hand, Helen endeavored to continue her toilet.

"Dotsie!" she cried. "Do stop that running! There's little enough room, as it is."

Dotsie paused.

"When I grow up," she asserted, "I'm going to have great, long hair like that."

Helen's hair was undeniably long. When she held it out behind her in the tiny dressing room, it all but touched the opposite wall. It was exceedingly difficult to handle at the moment, for Dotsie had resumed her peregrinations.

"Oh, Jack!" cried Helen. "What are you doing with that screen?"

"Nothing much," replied her son, with deliberation. "I was just wiggling it." A loud scraping ensued.

Looking down, Helen regarded Cornelia's outthrust foot. It was incased in a boy's tennis shoe, perfectly square, above which showed a thick ankle.

"No wonder you wear your shoes out, Cornelia," she remarked, "dragging your feet about!"

"I wasn't dragging them about," Cornelia returned argumentatively. "I was hardly moving them at all."

Slump-shouldered, she sat on the floor. Her arms were fat, her hair untidy.

"Couldn't you brush up those short hairs?" Helen suggested.

Through the straight, straggling locks, her daughter looked up. "No use," she answered blithely. "They stay for two minutes; then the second I move, down they come again."

Helen repressed a sigh.

"She's going to be ugly," she thought, dodging Dotsie with the arm

that held the hair. "I know she is." It was an unfortunate moment for this reflection, and did not advance the process of dressing. "Where can I have put my nail file?" she said aloud.

"I took it," answered Cornelia, with an air of imparting interesting information. "It's in my room, I think."

She did not move. Helen gazed at her reproachfully.

"Please get it at once," she ordered, adding: "Does it ever occur to you, when you take anything, to put it back?"

"I'm afraid it never does, muzz," laughed Cornelia, heaving herself to her feet with more rapidity than grace.

"Ow!" whimpered Dotsie. "You stepped on my toe!"

"Poor toe!" cried Cornelia tenderly, bending to feel the little, supple foot. In so doing, she lost her own precarious balance, and fell full length.

Everything on the bureau shook; the stoppers clinked in the cologne bottles, the hairpins danced on the tray. Loud cackles of laughter resounded. The hairbrush dropped to the floor; the hair dropped down Helen's back.

Cornelia had risen to her knees, and turned up a flushed, merry face.

"Help!" she yammered idiotically, beating about her with her hands. Jack came to her rescue, while she exploded with giggles.

"My!" he exclaimed, pulling valiantly. "How silly girls are!"

"No sillier than you!" shrieked Cornelia, upright, seizing him by the throat.

A puppylike scuffle followed. Bedlam reigned. Rough-house, and instigated by a young lady of fifteen!

"Stop!" Helen cried, straining her naturally low voice to be audible above the din. "Out with you! Every one of you!"

Instantly silence reigned, broken by Dotsie.

"Not me!" she said, her sweet face

aglow with conscious rectitude. "I haven't done anything."

"Haven't you?" returned Helen grimly. "You little baby tiger, you, stalking, stalking! If you stay, you mustn't stalk any more!"

"No," smiled Dotsie, sitting down. "No, mover, dear."

Helen began to powder her nose. "I'll leave the hair till later," she decided. "If I could only twist it into a pug, with two hairpins stuck through! What's the use of trying to look like a butterfly when one is really the mother of three wild Indians? It's deceitful."

Cornelia, in transit, paused to watch the powdering.

"Put more on the tip," she directed, in the unmodulated tones of superabundant youth. "There's a shiny knob."

Helen winced. It was not in Cornelia's nature to mince words, but this was too much.

"What did I say?" she cried sharply. "Go immediately!"

They went, and tears of utter weariness of soul sprang to Helen's eyes. She wiped them away hastily, lest Dotsie should see.

"I ought to be missing them now," she thought, "but I don't. I'm a bad mother. I wish they wouldn't regard it as a right to come into my dressing room! I wish they'd let me alone!"

In her inmost heart she meant it. Of the crisis through which she was passing, Helen had no idea, attributing the numerous evidences of it to a natural, wholly ephemeral irritation. This was not due to a lack of perception on her part, but to her conception of her relation to her children. She would have repudiated with high indignation the suggestion that anything on earth could come between mother and child.

The hairdressing was scarcely completed when a tattoo resounded on the shut door.

"May we come back?"

Cornelia's voice! Always Cornelia's voice, more boyish than Jack's!

"We'll be as quiet as mice," it continued, with unmistakable sincerity. "Honest we will."

"Well," said Helen grudgingly, and they burst through the door as through the gates of heaven. Ah, the lavishness of children! Giving, for so little, so much! But Helen was in no mood for such realizations.

"I'm sorry I said I'd lend the house for that concert to-day," she said disconsolately, gazing out at the sun-flecked lawn. "I never feel like listening to music in the morning, anyway, and it's a waste to spend such a morning as this indoors!"

"Do you think so?" answered Cornelia reflectively. "When the sun shines, I don't care where I am, or what I happen to do. Anything's fun. Can't I help you about it, muzz?"

"How?" asked Helen.

"Oh, I don't know," the girl replied vaguely, somewhat chilled. "Moving furniture, or something."

"There are plenty of people to move the furniture," said her mother. "It's not necessary for you to do it."

"I wish it were," replied Cornelia. "I love to get my hands on things, and hurl them around."

"Why, you're exercising the whole day long!" protested her mother.

"I know," was the reply, "but it doesn't seem to take it out of me a bit. When I get into bed at night, I'm not tired enough to go to sleep!"

Helen marveled in silence at this physical activity. Finer built, smaller boned, she, at the same age, had required but half the outlet for her energies that Cornelia did.

Together they went downstairs. In the music room, the gilt chairs were standing in stereotyped rows.

"How forlorn it looks!" commented Cornelia. "And how horrible those hollyhocks are in here! They scream

at everything. Let me get something else, muzz!"

"If there's time," her mother agreed tentatively.

"Loads," was the hearty assurance. "The garden's full of flowers. I'll be back in a jiffy, with armfuls."

Joyously she bounded off.

In ten minutes she reappeared, blown head above a riot of blossoms.

"Aren't they lovely?" she yodeled. "Oh, muzz, I wish you'd make me flower girl for the rest of the summer!"

"You'd be tired of it in a day," was the discouraging answer.

"I suppose I would," Cornelia admitted. That she had not tired of it as yet was evident. Her massing of the flowers was faultless; in no time at all they stood about everywhere in vases, making the somber room bloom like a bower.

"You certainly have an eye for color," approved her mother, wondering whence this talent was derived, and why Cornelia did not exercise it upon her personal appearance. Her eyes fell upon a vivid green-and-red velvet bow which her daughter had pinned at her throat, a decoration utterly at variance with the simple gingham dress she wore.

"You don't like it?" said the girl, catching her look. "Well, I don't myself—much. I only put it on because I wanted to be gay." She fondled, with hovering touch, three exquisite roses that she held in her hand.

"Wouldn't a rose do?" Helen suggested.

Cornelia shook her head gravely.

"Roses don't go with me," she said. "I wouldn't ask it of them! They're for you."

"Curious child!" returned her mother, gently taking the proffered flowers.

"Horrid child!" corrected Cornelia. "Oh, muzz, how did such a dainty

thing as you are happen to have an ugly duckling like me?"

"Don't talk nonsense!" returned Helen, fastening the roses at her belt. But her inner consciousness, though she did her best to suppress it, insisted upon echoing: "How, indeed?"

She went out into the hall, Cornelia, as usual, at her heels.

"I'm going upstairs," she said. "Let me know if anybody arrives."

She had scarcely reached the landing when Cornelia announced from below, in an audible stage whisper:

"Muzz! The musicians have come."

Helen patted her hair, a thing she had warned her daughter never to do for fear of resembling a shopgirl, and, standing on tiptoe, peered down. A black-coated form or two were visible, and heavy cases of instruments were being dragged in.

"I'll give them a minute or two," she decided, and waited until she had heard their creaking footsteps grow faint. Then, transformed miraculously—by some subtle stiffening, some inner breath of convention—into a woman of fashion bearing no analogy whatever to her who, but an instant before, had been hanging girlishly over the stairs, she came sedately down.

At the door of the music room, she paused. Even in the morning, it was a room full of mystery. It had stained-glass windows, and its outlook was over the water, on the shadiest side of the house. At the extreme end of the room the door to the garden stood open, and all the glory of the August morning burst in. Beyond the darkness and the cool and the quiet one could see roses amid their foliage, and masses of purple pansies.

Close to the door was the piano, placed to catch the light; and beside the piano, facing the room, sat an elderly man, testing his cello's strings with long, delicate fingers. Glancing up, he

saw Helen and Cornelia, and rose to greet them.

"It was most kind of you, *gnädige Frau*, to give your beautiful room for our music," he said appreciatively.

His tones—deep, resonant, and sympathetic—produced an instantaneous effect upon Helen. She felt as one feels when one is burning with fever, and a cool hand is laid upon one's brow. Her acquired ease deserted her; her usual words of welcome failed. The rigidity went out of her spine. Like a little child, she looked up simply into the gaunt, gentle German face.

"It's—a pleasure," she said hesitatingly, remembering how little of a pleasure she had anticipated it would be.

"And the flowers," he went on, looking about, "with their so sweet perfume! *Warhaftig*, you have brought the garden in!"

"That was my daughter," Helen hastened to say. "She arranged them. Herr Annsprücher, this is my daughter, Cornelia."

As he had looked at the flowers, so Herr Annsprücher looked, long and tenderly, at the young girl. For a young girl seemed to the old musician to hold in her person the concentrated sweetness of all the flowers in a flowering world.

"You will not mind," he asked Helen, "if we rehearse a little?"

Cornelia stepped toward him.

"May I help? Do anything?" she queried.

The old cry! Helen opened protesting lips, as it had become second nature to her to do.

"Help?" asked Herr Annsprücher, before she could speak. "Surely you may, if you will be so friendly! How if we two, you and I, could move the piano about two feet. Yes? To get a better light."

Gleefully they hurried off together, in step, shoulder to shoulder, Cor-

nelia's whole figure radiating a gayety that the green-and-red bow could never have produced.

"I wouldn't let her move even a chair," thought Helen remorsefully, "and he offers her the piano!"

Amid the shadows at the back of the room, flung, relaxed and still, into the inviting abysses of a huge sofa, Helen listened to the rehearsal. The orchestra consisted of three instruments—piano, violin, and cello—but it was to the tones of the latter that the long-quiet depths of her nature answered, as they had answered to Herr Annsprücher's voice. Near a window, immovable as if carved out of marble, stood the habitually restless daughter of the house, her profile turned toward her mother. At this distance her imperfections did not show; only the bold outline of her clear-cut features stood out, striking, stern, and sweet. The tempered light from the stained-glass window fell upon her hair; upon Herr Annsprücher's face, full of inspiration; upon his bent, contented shoulders, his beloved instrument, his fine hand.

The concert was over, and most of the audience had gone. A few elderly women, who thought such a privilege should be included in the price of the ticket, had stepped across the threshold of the music room into the garden, and were examining the view through lorgnettes critically, as those who had paid were entitled to do.

"My cello case?" Herr Annsprücher was asking.

"It's in the coat closet," cried Cornelia. "I'll bring it out."

"It's a big baby to travel with," smiled the musician, examining the cello with eyes full of parental love. "I have to buy a berth for it when we go together on the sleeping car."

Helen stood uncertain. He was preparing to leave. The concert was over, and there was nothing to keep him.

This man who had roused her to new emotions, who had stirred hidden depths, was going out of her life, leaving her in a turmoil of unformulated questions. His very voice had made her feel herself so poor a thing! He must give her more, more! She could not let him go!

"Won't you," she asked, with unwonted eagerness, "won't you stay for lunch?"

His eyes showed his appreciation of her hospitality.

"How are you kind!" he cried. "Unfortunately I must decline. We should all take our midday meal together—Herr Elmendorf"—indicating the accompanist, "Herr Zimmermann," the violinist, "my two daughters, my son, and I."

He waved his hand toward a group. Helen had not perceived, a group consisting of two fat, very red-cheeked young German women, and a thin lad, fearfully straight, with his hair pompadour.

"We go to the hotel," Herr Annsprücher concluded, laying his instrument carefully in the case Cornelia had brought in.

Helen turned courteously to the members of the musician's family, who shook her by the hand, each in turn.

"Have you been at all the concerts?" she asked, wishing to say something.

"Oh, indeed, yes!" cried the reddest-cheeked, fattest daughter. "We come from Boston, and go back the next day."

"All the way from Boston!" was Helen's astonished reply.

Three pairs of eyes turned toward the old musician, three pairs of eyes with one expression—that of adoration.

"We would not miss a concert of papa," said the other red-cheeked daughter quietly; "not if we had to cross the whole United States."

"Ach so," said their father, adding,

in vibrant, organlike tones that deepened till they brought the tears to Helen's eyes: "Foolish ones!"

"Won't you," she cried, yielding to an overwhelming impulse, "won't you all stay?"

"Oh!" begged Cornelia, with clasped hands. "*Do!* You must!"

Herr Annsprücher hesitated.

"It is too much," he protested.

"No, no!" Helen urged. "Cornelia, run and tell Thompson there will be six extra for lunch."

Cornelia bolted.

"Thompson!" she shrieked in the hall. "Six extra for lunch!"

The butler stiffened. His disapproval was manifest in every angle of his body. He had never been accustomed, in this house, to a hospitality served without notice. After the lapse of half an hour, however, with the aid of the resourceful cook, he had recovered sufficiently to offer a meal that was not too thin.

The guests, at least, found nothing about it to criticize, and ate heartily. John came in, and before the omelet had been consumed he and Herr Annsprücher were chatting like old friends. John was a delightful host, and he enjoyed nothing so much as an impromptu party, a pleasure that rarely broke in upon his ordered existence.

"How—how charming he is with them all!" thought Helen, surprised, and ashamed of her surprise. "I thought he'd be bored. He generally is when I have people for lunch!"

It was impossible not to feel at ease with those who were so frankly enjoying themselves; out of the question to be artificial among a company each individual of which was utterly genuine. In this atmosphere, Cornelia basked as in the sun's rays. Herr Annsprücher fathered her; the jolly daughters jested with her and petted her; the tall son looked at her sideways in bashful admiration; the little

accompanist warmed to her about his music; the violinist told her softly of the privations of his early years, before recognition had come.

After the meal was over, all adjourned to the garden.

"*Ach*, what a pretty garden!" cried the reddest-cheeked daughter, folding her hands over her stomach. "Look, papa! The bushes stir so strangely!"

"It's that cat!" said Helen. "Shoo!"

"It's my kitty," explained Dotsie, with glowing eyes.

"Yours, my child?" cried the deep, organ tones, as Herr Annsprücher drew the little one toward him. "*Äh*, the sweet little cat! *Komm dann her, Mieschen!*"

And once more Helen was arrested, put to shame, troubled, as if the trifling incident had possessed a grave significance.

"Have you dogs?" continued the musician, diligently scratching the head of the kitten, which Dotsie had deposited in his lap. "We had one for ten years—a dachshund. He is dead."

The faces of the daughters grew sorrowful; the son gravely shook his head.

"Poor, dear Karl!" they murmured, in chorus. "Papa took him everywhere."

"Even across the ocean," added Herr Annsprücher. "I thought he would be so contented in the fatherland. But at Frankfort—what think you?—he was ordered by the police not only to be muzzled, but also to be leashed." He paused, and his eyes twinkled. "He was an independent American dog by education," he went on reminiscently, "and he liked not the restraint upon his liberty. We had to bring him home again."

"Were you glad to get back to Germany?" asked Jack.

Herr Annsprücher regarded him. "Yes, *mein Söhnchen*," he returned thoughtfully, "and no. At Frankfort, also, I should get on the street car.

I made sign, but the car did not stop. So I ran along the street, and swung up myself, as I had acquired the art of doing in this country. I got my fare out of my pocket, and to the conductor I offered it. He refused it. 'You got on when the car was moving,' he said to me, like a professor. 'It's against the rules. I let you off at the next corner.' At the corner the car stops, and off I get, like a schoolboy that is punished."

The children's delighted laughter rang out, and the musician smiled responsively.

Just then the butler appeared with the coffee.

"Miss Cornelia's teacher is waitin'," he announced.

Cornelia's face grew long.

"Oh, dear!" she cried, in desperation. "I was having such a good time, I forgot all about that old Latin lesson."

"In this garden," said Herr Annsprücher, "over coffee, and among friends, one could forget all that is disagreeable in the world."

"Friends!" thought Helen. "How naturally he said 'friends'! This is friendship, then."

When Cornelia approached him to say good-by, the musician carefully placed his cup upon the cropped grass, and, rising with charming courtesy, held for a moment, in his blue-veined, delicate ones, her brown and vigorous hand.

Her mother, sitting between the old

man's two daughters, had failed to notice that by contrast with them her own child appeared almost slender. She had somehow lost her eye for externals. These were not dowdy Germans, without style; they were devoted women, who, for sheer affection, would have made nothing of crossing a continent. When John looked at her, she gave him a smile so full of compunction and of apology and of tenderness that he was quite at a loss.

"What's the matter?" he whispered anxiously, leaning toward her. "You look pale. Aren't you well?"

"Very well," she assured him. And all the time she was thinking: "This man, toward whom I have dared to assume an attitude of superiority, loves me just as much as these girls love their father! Only instead of making his love my inspiration, I have let it spoil me utterly! I've become an over-indulged, useless American woman!"

There, in the sunlit garden, her vanity at last let go its strangle hold; she saw for what they were her unbelievable pettinesses, her despicable discontents.

Herr Annsprücher, still standing, was following Cornelia with his eyes; looking at her as her own mother had never looked; looking, Helen thought, as does God, who looketh at the heart.

"How is she splendid!" he said softly. "In health, so magnificent—in nature, so straightforward—in mind, so keen! That is the best of all things that your country produces—the American girl."



His Gentleman

By Joseph Ivers Lawrence



T was not that it was so unusual for the bell to ring toward midnight that Eyles frowned and muttered vexatiously, but he had just come in, tired, and wanted to go to bed.

"See who it is, Rowley," he said to his man.

The valet passed noiselessly into the entrance hall and opened the door.

"Very sorry, madam," Eyles heard him say; "Mr. Eyles is not at home."

"Nonsense! I saw him come in just now," a woman's voice replied.

Eyles dropped his pipe, and stood up as a handsome woman in a hooded evening cloak swirled into the room.

"Mrs. Probyn, you're stark mad!"

"Are you going to be a brute, Harry Eyles?" the woman cried. "Probyn has been vile to me; he's been away three days, now. I told you I'd come to you if he treated me so again. I want sympathy, Harry, and advice."

"You have my sympathy," said Eyles coolly. "My advice is: Go home!"

"I have no home," she protested dramatically. "What harm——"

The doorbell rang. The woman darted into the next room.

"Mr. Eyles is not at home, gentlemen," said Rowley, at the door.

"Forget it!" growled a man's hoarse voice. "I had to punch that fool of a hall man to get up here. I guess I can come in here with my friends, even if Eyles isn't at home. I want a drink."

A sharp scuffle followed. Then three men—Probyn, Tennant, and Weir—marched victoriously into the room.

"Is a man never to have any privacy?" Eyles asked coldly. "Rowley speaks for me, and he's not to be treated——"

"Where's that boasted hospitality of

yours?" demanded Probyn, unabashed. "Give us a drink and we'll leave you to your grouch."

"Gladly, if that's all," returned Eyles. He gave a signal to the disheveled valet, who hastily retired to his pantry.

"There's something in the wind!" announced Tennant gayly, with sudden suspicion. "Old Eyles is a wise one, and this house is no cloister. Let's have a look around."

Eyles sprang forward angrily, as the three rallied to search the suite. A sudden crash, and they stopped short. Just over the threshold, Rowley had stumbled and dropped his tray. In so doing, he had struck the electric-light switch. The room was in darkness.

"Help! I'm being robbed!" yelled Probyn from the farther corner. Tennant and Weir stumbled over tables and chairs to get to him, but in the instant of pandemonium Eyles had the visitor in the opera cloak out of the other room, through the clamorous darkness, and into the outer hall.

A sadly rumpled Probyn pointed at Rowley as the light flashed on again. "Your impeccable valet has a black eye, Eyles," he said, "and he also has my pearl studs and my watch!"

The valet cringingly drew forth the articles named. "I've tried to be honest, Mr. Eyles, but——"

Weir caught up the phone. "We'll have the police in on this," he said.

With a leap, Eyles knocked the instrument from his hand.

"This is my house," he announced gravely, "and if the police come here they will come to arrest three thugs for disorderly conduct. Take your things, Probyn. And now get out—all of you! My gentleman, Mr. Rowley, will show you the door."



II.—SOMEWHAT DRASTIC MEASURES

ONE afternoon I got into a discussion with Gerald and my husband, Walter.

After their marriage, Gerald and Nancy had come to stay with us at Beechwood for a while, and then, as Nancy had a girl friend coming to visit her, they had taken a cottage near us so that we could all be together.

A little later, Marjorie, another friend of Nancy's, and Claude Hemming had fallen in love with each other, and had got very much mixed up over it. Whereupon, Gerald and I had taken a hand and straightened things out for them, and in doing so had resorted to a little piece of play acting which, while it had the desired result, had also further results, as you shall see.

The discussion arose soon after the arrival of Nancy's friend, Eleanor Hartley, and, at the outset, centered about that young lady and a certain Signor Farelli, whom she had met abroad and who had followed her to America and then to Beechwood.

All three of us were very much in favor of Eleanor, an exceedingly pretty girl with light yellow hair and hazel eyes and the peculiar warm, transparent skin and rounded figure that sometimes go with that coloring. She had, too, that Heaven-sent, quietly elusive manner that is so fascinating to

men; and underneath was just a sweet girl with a delicious sense of humor, a natural faculty for teasing in a harmless sort of way, and a general preference for her own sex.

We were all equally *not* in favor of Farelli, which, in the case of the two men, was not surprising, and it was that fact that brought about the discussion.

"I don't like him," said Walter. "He's too—too—"

"Obsequious," said Gerald.

"Clammy," said I.

Walter nodded vigorously.

"When foreigners are nice," said I, "they are very, very nice, and when they are bad they are horrid. At least, when they are that kind of bad," I went on, remembering a certain Hungarian I once knew—but never mind. "Anyway, I don't believe Eleanor likes him," I finished.

"No," said the two men, promptly and in unison.

"How do you know?" I demanded suspiciously.

"We don't, but she couldn't," said Walter hastily. "At least, I don't believe she does."

"As if you could tell anything about it, either of you!" I said.

"The matter is perfectly simple," said Gerald.

Walter and I looked inquiringly at

him while he puffed at his pipe for a moment.

"Kitty, here," said he at last, "will simply follow her usual custom and straighten the whole thing out, marrying Eleanor off to somebody else," and he settled back in his chair as if everything were now arranged.

I started to direct a few remarks of an incisive and personal nature at Gerald, when Walter interrupted.

"No!" said he explosively. "I won't stand for it!"

We both turned on him, but Walter was unmoved.

"I won't stand for it!" he repeated. "The first time Kitty started fixing things wasn't so bad, because, while of course it's a bit of a nuisance having Gerald in the family, still the independent way he was careering around the world by himself was a crying evil, and marrying him off to Nancy put a stop to it once and for all. But," and here Walter shook his finger threateningly at us both, "but the second time was different, and Lord knows what may happen the third time."

"What do you mean?" we asked in astonishment.

"Well," said Walter, "it's like this. The first time you tried your schemes, Gerald, there, ended up by kissing my sister Nancy. That of course is all right, and as Nancy seemed to like it, and proceeded to arrange for a regular diet, I have no kick to make, although I will say there's no accounting for tastes. But the second time Gerald ended up by kissing *you*."

Here he turned on poor me and paused to let what he said sink in, while Gerald and I gazed at him in amazement. We had, of course, told Nancy all about it, as we had promised, but we had no idea Walter knew anything about *that* part of the affair of Claude and Marjorie.

We were too surprised to say anything, and Walter went on:

"Oh, yes, I knew all about it. In fact, I saw the whole thing."

"How?" said I, while Gerald retired from the conversation by scrouching down in his chair and covering his head with a newspaper. I could see him shaking with laughter under it.

"How?" said Walter. "Merely because I happened to accompany Claude into the hall when the—er—incident took place."

"I wondered why you never asked any questions about it," I said; whereupon a veritable howl of laughter came forth from under the newspaper.

Walter continued his discourse with heightened dignity.

"Far be it from me," he said, "to dictate to Gerald whom he should kiss and whom he shouldn't kiss. But this much I will say: The first time he kissed Nancy; the second time he kissed you. There are only three of us about, and the deduction is obvious." Here Walter began to grin delightedly. "But if you, Gerald," he went on, "ever start a third scheme, and end up by trying to kiss *me*, there's going to be trouble. That's all I've got to say." And he sat down in triumph.

Gerald rose from his chair, newspaper and all, like a flushed partridge.

"You disgusting old crocodile!" he said, and, seizing a siphon of soda from the small table beside him, he advanced on Walter.

"My only collar!" screamed Walter. "Quit it, Gerald!"

"It isn't his only collar," I said indignantly. "Go on and teach him not to be so disgustingly secretive."

"No," said Gerald, standing over Walter, who was wildly clasping a small cushion to his bosom in a desperate effort to shelter himself behind it. "No, I won't do you any injury now. But, by Jove!"—and I saw the light of battle kindle in his eyes—"we'll get even with him. Won't we, Kitty?"

"We will," I said.

"Well, I like that!" said Walter, visibly uneasy. "Here you spend the afternoon kissing my wife——"

Gerald reached for the siphon.

"All right," said Walter. "But no more schemes now." And he got up, with a wary eye on Gerald, and went off, muttering to himself, to his study.

Gerald and I sat and looked at each other rather sheepishly.

"H'mm," said Gerald.

"Ahem," said I, and we both laughed.

Now, this is the story of how we got even with Walter:

Farelli was supposed to be staying at the hotel, but as Eleanor was the odd girl in our circle, he made that an excuse, I suppose, for taking most of his meals either with the Druces—Gerald and Nancy—or with us. The man spoke English perfectly and with very little accent, and there was no denying the fact that he was a good talker, with amusing and original ideas. Nancy, in fact, seemed to have taken quite a fancy to him, although I have more than a suspicion that she did so partly to tease Gerald and partly to take Farelli off Eleanor's hands from time to time. Eleanor, in fact, got more and more bored with him every day, if the way she alternately teased him and ignored him was any criterion.

This afternoon, when Walter left Gerald and me on the porch, Nancy and Eleanor and Farelli had gone off in a canoe together, and, soon after Walter's departure, we saw Eleanor coming up the path from the lake all by herself.

"Coming up the path," said I to Gerald, "you behold the instrument, I hope, of Walter's final ignominy and abasement."

"As how?" asked Gerald.

"I don't know how yet," said I.

Fate, as if in response to Gerald's question, proceeded to show us a way.

Eleanor came gracefully and silently up the steps and sank into a chair without a word. She has the knack of almost always doing the unexpected.

"What is it?" said I. "Too much sun, or——"

"Too much Farelli!" said Eleanor, with a little gurgle that many an actress would give her jewels for. Her eyelids drooped for a moment, then: "Nancy doesn't seem to mind, though," she added, in a fatigued voice and with the faintest flicker of a glance at Gerald.

Gerald, however, was not to be drawn so easily.

"He seems a decent sort of chap," said he.

"I rather *thought* you liked him," said Eleanor, with the faintest note of challenge and disdain in her voice and another flickering glance.

I listened, with outward calm and inward delight, waiting for Gerald's reply.

"Well, he's your friend, of course," said Gerald, and thus administered a very neat reproof for a man.

Eleanor gurgled again suddenly.

"He must be *very* poor," she said. "Poor man!"

"Why?" asked Gerald.

"Because the poor, you know, we have always with us." And she went off into delighted and delightful ripples of laughter.

"These foreigners," said I ruminatively, "have the most violently strict notions about women. Why, I expect if Farelli caught you or me flirting—with another man than himself, be it understood—he would probably never speak to us again." I glanced casually at Gerald.

Eleanor intercepted the glance and grew serious, but I went on without pausing.

"That reminds me," I said. "Gerald and I have just been commiserating each other because we haven't any way

of getting even with Walter." I glanced at Eleanor and saw that I had her attention. "Did Nancy ever tell you anything about the affair of Claude and Marjorie?"

Eleanor gurgled. "She—ah—mentioned it," she said, looking at Gerald. Gerald moved uneasily in his chair, and Eleanor laughed.

"It would be a source of the most intense pleasure to us," I said, "if we could, as the papers say, 'apprehend Walter in the act' of some little flight of fancy such as Nancy, perhaps, explained to you."

"It might also," I went on, observing the growing comprehension and amusement on Eleanor's face, "it might also bring about other results equally to be desired."

At this point Gerald interrupted.

"I won't," said he, "stay and listen to such a perversion of Eleanor's ideas of social etiquette. I'm going to find Nancy." And he very tactfully departed down the front steps.

Eleanor and I were silent a moment.

"It might be arranged," she laughed finally; "provided I have your permission. Whatever the means, the end is a happy one."

"You darling!" said I. "I knew you'd be sporting."

Nothing remained but the setting of the stage and the cues for the principal actors in the comedy, and after Eleanor and I had discussed and planned for a few minutes, everything was arranged; I promising to look after Farelli's entrance at the proper moment. We decided on the next day for the first and, as I gravely stipulated, the only performance.

A minute or two later, Nancy and Gerald and Farelli came up from the lake, and we talked of other things. However, I managed to convey to Gerald that Eleanor had agreed to help us out.

The next afternoon, Farelli made his

appearance as usual, and Eleanor and I began to put our plan into effect. The others had just come over, and we were all sitting on the front porch.

"Let's walk down to the lake," said I to Farelli.

He rose, and we led the way, while Gerald, as prearranged, fell into step with Nancy, leaving Eleanor and Walter to bring up the rear.

I kept Farelli beside me by means of a little judicious flattery, and we sauntered down the path and in a moment or two entered the woods that lie between the house and the lake. Gerald and Nancy were close behind us, but after a moment or two Walter and Eleanor fell back, and we lost sight of them around a bend. I walked on for a few minutes and then stopped and looked back.

"Where are Eleanor and Walter?" I asked.

"They're coming on, I guess," said Gerald, with a half smile, catching up with us.

We waited a moment or two; but, of course, as Eleanor and I had arranged, they didn't appear.

"You don't suppose they're playing a trick on us, do you?" said I. Then, after a moment: "Let's go back and see."

We all turned back, Gerald and Nancy, to whom we had explained, giggling, apparently over nothing in particular.

In another moment we all rounded a corner and came upon a distressing sight.

Eleanor was sitting on a fallen log, holding her ankle in one hand. In the other she had a handkerchief and was dabbing her eyes with it, while on the log beside her sat Walter, with one arm around her. With the other hand he was patting her shoulder. As we came in sight, Eleanor turned her head so that her tearful face was about two

inches from Walter's. Then she closed her eyes.

Walter, as I confess I would have done myself, promptly kissed her!

"Oh!" said I, in a loud and horrified tone, and glanced at Farelli.

In his eyes, for a moment, I saw an expression that I didn't like at all, and that made me like him even less than I had before.

However, I left him and swept past the tearful and apparently terrified Eleanor and past Walter, who was standing up, with a bewildered and horrified expression on his face that made me want to hug him, and on up the path toward the house.

In a moment I heard Walter coming after me.

"Kitty!" he called; "wait a minute."

I quickened my pace and made no answer.

"Oh, Kitty, wait a minute!" he called again. He was much nearer now, and gaining rapidly, but I kept gallantly on.

At the steps he caught up with me.

"Kitty," he said, trying to get in front of me, "listen a minute. You don't understand."

"I *saw*," I said, in a muffled voice, and felt for my handkerchief.

"But, listen," he said; "I didn't— You don't think—I mean, there wasn't the slightest— Oh, Lord, Kitty, for Heaven's sake don't cry!"

I stumbled up the steps and sat down on the porch, burying my face in my hands. My shoulders were shaking in the most realistic fashion.

"Listen!" said Walter. "She hurt her ankle, and I was just—"

"Just trying to comfort her, I suppose?" I finished for him, in a choking voice.

"Yes," said Walter; "that was all. Oh, Lord, Kitty, please don't cry!" And he patted my shoulder.

I jerked it away.

"You patted *her* s-shoulder," I said.

"I know I did," said Walter. "But—she was crying, too," he finished brilliantly.

"And you dare to pretend," I said, in an angry voice, "that that gave you the right to p-pat her shoulder, when you know you have no right to pat anybody's shoulder except mine, and perhaps Nancy's, and only then if we happen to feel like it. You're a monster!"

"I'm not," said Walter.

"And all these years," I wailed—they weren't so *very* many—"I've b-been believing that you were above that sort of thing. Think of all the girls we've had here visiting us and the way you must have been carrying on with them all behind my back, and maybe laughing in your sleeve at me all the time!" My shoulders heaved convulsively.

"Oh, I say, Kitty," said Walter, drawing near and touching my arm here and there in a futile sort of way, "I haven't, really. You know I haven't."

"And you kissed her, too," said I. "And it looked as if it came perfectly naturally to you, too."

"Well," said Walter, "she was crying because she had hurt her ankle, and I was sorry for her. I didn't mean to kiss her, really I didn't. I don't know why I did."

"Habit!" said I, with another wail. "Besides," I went on indignantly, but more calmly—Walter is really too dear for anything—"she wasn't crying any worse than I am"—which, by the way, was true enough—"and you kissed her. You haven't even offered to kiss me yet."

Walter knelt down and pulled my hands away from my face. Then, noticing that my eyes weren't wet, he began to suspect something.

"You weren't crying!" said he.

"Neither was—" I began, and thought better of it.

Then I fixed him with my eye, and began to speak.

"You," I said, "are the person who was holding forth yesterday upon the way Gerald and I acted when we were merely thinking of helping Claude. You are the——"

Walter interrupted.

"You aren't cross a bit!" he said.

"I am," I said indignantly. "I'm furious."

"You dared," I went on, "to call Gerald and me down for a little piece of acting——"

"Mighty good acting," Walter interpolated.

"——for a little piece of acting like that, and the very next day you go and behave the way you have with a poor, young girl who has no one around to protect her. Oh, depth of infamy!" I said, and paused for breath.

"Bosh!" said Walter, in a disgusted, but relieved, tone, and getting up. "I believe the whole thing was a put-up job."

"And now to try and pretend the poor girl led you on! Oh, Walter, I never would have dreamed it!"

"Eh?" said Walter uneasily.

"I say, I never would have thought it of you."

"Well," said Walter, "I was surprised myself."

I tried hard to keep from laughing, but I couldn't. Finally, when I could get my breath, I said:

"Don't you ever dare to let me hear any more from you about that 'incident,' as you call it, between Gerald and me."

"I'll go in and mix us a couple of juleps," was all Walter replied.

Fortunately for his opinion of her, Walter thinks to this day that Eleanor really did hurt her ankle, and that he was of material assistance in comforting her at the right moment, and, for that matter, in the right way.

However, the affair had other and more important results, the details of which were told me by Nancy.

After my hasty departure, followed by Walter, Gerald and Nancy had waited a moment for Farelli, and then, as he began with great tact to talk about indifferent matters with Eleanor, they walked on.

Nancy said that she and Gerald had heard Eleanor and Farelli coming along the path behind them for some time, and then had noticed that they were no longer following.

They had walked a little way farther, laughing over Walter's predicament, and then had decided to turn back and rejoin the others.

Farelli and Eleanor, however, were nowhere to be found, and Nancy and Gerald had determined to go back to the house, thinking that the other two had returned there, when suddenly Nancy said she heard Eleanor's voice, away from the path and down toward the lake.

They listened a moment, and then heard Farelli's voice in what sounded like rather an ugly laugh.

"Let's go and investigate," said Gerald, and struck off the path in the direction from which the sound came.

Nancy followed him.

After a moment or two they came to some bushes, beyond which lay the clearing around the boathouse, and there in the open, facing each other, they saw Eleanor and Farelli.

Gerald and Nancy stopped as if by a common impulse, and just then Farelli spoke.

"Ah," he said, "but I am sure you will not refuse to accept it. I have waited for long to offer it to you, but until this afternoon I have hesitated to do so."

Nancy and Gerald could see that Farelli had a little box in his hand, and they were just turning away, thinking

that it was scarcely a good time to intrude, when Eleanor's reply stopped them.

"Why," she said, "have you ceased to hesitate this afternoon?"

"Well"—they saw Farelli shrug his shoulders—"have I not seen that you are not, perhaps, so—unkind as I had thought?"

"What do you mean?" demanded Eleanor.

"Come!" said Farelli. "You understand me. Will you not take it?" He held out the box.

"Will you kindly take me back to the house, or else explain what you mean at once?" said Eleanor angrily.

This time Farelli's tone lost its suavity.

"Very well," he said almost fiercely. "You have asked for the explanation. You shall have it. I have followed you all the way to here because I love you. This afternoon I see you kind to another man who is married, when for so long I have waited for your kindness. Now"—smiling and taking her wrists in his hands quickly—"for making me explain, you shall give to me what just now you gave to him." And, in spite of Eleanor's struggles, he drew her toward him.

At this instant, Nancy says, there was a crash in front of her, and just as she heard Eleanor's little scream of fright and anger, Gerald burst through the bushes, and she saw him striding toward Farelli.

The latter turned, with an angry expression that quickly changed to one of dismay, as he saw Gerald bearing down upon him.

The next moment, according to Nancy, Farelli was lifted by the collar of his coat and another portion of his apparel and laid gently upon the edge of the bank. Then Gerald gave him a push, and the wildly clawing Farelli disappeared in a whirl of mud and

gravel, down the steep bank and into the lake.

After the splash, Nancy held her breath and waited, and in a moment or two up over the edge of the bank came a dripping and gesticulating object, fairly stuttering with rage and excitement, and started for Gerald. Then, observing Gerald's calm and expectant attitude, and seeing Eleanor and Nancy, who had come out from behind the bushes, both doubled up with laughter, Farelli thought better of it, and, after raising one hand to heaven in a last, final, and all-embracing stutter, went off at a rapid pace in the direction of the hotel.

How he explained his condition there we none of us know, but at any rate he packed up and left the next day, and we haven't heard of him since.

At supper that night we were a hilarious party.

The affair of Farelli had put Walter's disgrace so completely in the shade that we didn't need to pretend to be shocked with Eleanor. Moreover, the final flight of Farelli was a relief to all of us, because the man had really got on all our nerves a little.

Said Gerald finally:

"I don't know what would become of us without our hostess. She takes such splendid care of us all."

"I'd like to know what Kitty's had to do with this," said Walter.

Nancy, looking like a very serious little flower, if that conveys anything, interrupted before Walter could inquire further.

"For my part," said she, "I consider that there has been altogether too much miscellaneous kissing going on around here. I don't mind that so much as I do the unfair way things are divided. Neither my big brother, there, nor Gerald"—here, all eyes being upon her, she blushed deliciously—"offer any attractions from the standpoint of novel-

ty," she went on hastily. "Therefore, the next time any one starts playing post office, I'm going to send for some deserving masculine friend, and take a hand in the game myself. Any objections?"

In the second's silence that followed before we rose, en masse, and suppressed Nancy, I noted that Gerald's

sense of humor had unaccountably deserted him.

He looked distinctly glum.

One thing more: In view of what Gerald has said of me, and for my own protection, I should like to add that Eleanor is still, so far as I know, a blissfully happy and contented bachelor girl.



ON THE CITY STREET

FREE of all enslavement,
Free of fret and care,
Youth, upon the pavement,
Dances to the air
Of a street piano,
While a joyous note
Comes in shrill soprano
From each childish throat.

As the tune is ringing
Through the dingy street,
Blithe young bodies swinging
Dance on rhythmic feet;
'Mid the city's clamor,
'Mid the smoke and grime,
Comes the golden glamour
Of a vanished time.

Here, in garments scanty,
Somehow we can see,
Many a young bacchante
Many a dryad free;
Somehow we are glancing
At a pagan clan—
Fauns and wood nymphs dancing
To the pipes o' Pan!

BERTON BRALEY.



ALICIA DEARMOTH lay at the end of the gun room, and a candle burned at her head. In the huge silver candlestick the thick white taper threw its light across the face of the dead woman, and the sconces at the sides of the room and at each end held a few more feeble flames. In the dim light, and in the silence about that greater silence, the empty coats of mail that once had shielded long-forgotten Dearmoths stood stiffly on their pedestals or leaned weakly against the wall, like cold and wearied sentries of the dead, keeping a stern, sad watch over the lovely clay before them. Helmets and swords and breastplates hung along the walls among the portraits of grim warriors, who looked with eyes as sightless as the holes in their metal casques on the face of the dead Alicia.

In still, pallid beauty, Alicia rested, and knew, with a strange, light consciousness, that she had passed from the part of the living. She was aware of her position in the empty, silent room; she was conscious of the rigid stretch of her recumbent figure; she was sentient of the vague inaction about her lifeless heart. She knew that death had claimed her; yet, from under the lids of her lightly closed eyes, she could see a ray from the candle at her head slant a narrow way across her still, full bosom as far down as her folded hands, could see it flickering to a wider shadow at the side of her stately pall.

Her ears could hear the faint sounds of a hushed activity in the castle rooms beyond; could hear the sighing of the autumn wind in the trees outside the slightly opened window.

A few short hours ago she had been numbered among the living; one sharp, swift pain had placed her here among the dead. When her women had shrouded her in a soft white robe, she had known it, had felt the loving touch of their hands. Then she had been carried, as was the custom, to keep the pretense of a vigil among the trophies of bygone warrior Dearmoths in the gun room.

In death, with this light perception of sight and sound, Alicia Dearmoth lay, and was content. Her end she had expected a long time, for she had known that the keen stab of pain she had so often suffered could have but one conclusion; for two years she had waited for death's coming, and had smiled to think that no one knew of her doom. With this knowledge, and in loneliness of spirit, she had read much in the great library above, to learn how death would come; and, learning more in her sad curiosity, she had read of this rare thing that was now happening to her. Strange cases were told of, in old volumes, of consciousness persisting for a short period after the heart had ceased to beat and the pulses to move; of those who appeared to have gone on the long, long journey knowing all that was taking

place about them. Then, she had marveled at this possibility; now, she wondered why this unreal reprieve had been granted to her. It would be short—an hour or two at most of grim tarrying, she knew; but to Alicia Dearmoth it was an undesired respite, and, content, she waited for her final end.

Content, because the last three years of her young life held only remorse and sorrow; more content, because her end would close the memory of two tragic days. For three years, in thought, she had daily rehearsed the events of those days, and now she began to live over her brief young life in the short time she had left to her before she should succumb to eternal forgetfulness.

It had never ceased to be a wonder to her that Arnold Dearmoth had chosen her for his wife; what had she of charm to equal his fame and his high position? She had soon felt that she was wearying him, that he was giving only a kind regard in return for her eager affection. The work he loved had claimed him, and his wife had been left to her own device.

Soon this device had taken on the person of Roger Courailles, a young French relative, who had been visiting at the castle. Had it been relief that had made her husband leave her so often with his cousin? When Roger had betrayed his feeling for her, she had used the boy's interest to vex her grave, indifferent husband. If Arnold had seen her effort, he had given no sign of knowledge. Then she had listened to Roger Courailles' pity for her, unloved and forgotten by her husband, and in resentment of this neglect had gone from her home with his kinsman. Ah, if Arnold had loved her, she would not have gone that day with Roger!

With Roger Courailles she had journeyed all day, on the way to an obscure watering place, where they were to rest before leaving for France. But a

broken rail on the track had wrecked their train and left them stunned and bewildered among the few uninjured. All that night she and Roger had waited in a derailed car, and it had been morning before they had reached their destination.

Those hours of lonely waiting had told her the truth. She had been filled with wild regret, and with an anguished longing to return to her home. She had shivered with despair as she had faced a future without her husband.

She had waited in the rooms assigned them in an unfrequented inn, while Roger had gone downstairs to make a protest about something. She had taken off her hat and wrap, and had been standing, with clenched hands, in a passion of remorse for her folly, when the door had opened, and her husband had strode into the room. How he had found them she never knew. She had sunk into a chair, hiding her face from his sight.

"Look up while I speak to you," Arnold Dearmoth had commanded. She had seen his stern face chiseled with fury.

"Listen to my plans for you," he had continued. "Put your things in your bag, and hold yourself in readiness to leave here. First, I shall meet your lover, as he and I have arranged. Now, there are three events for which you are to prepare. If I die, you will return to the castle, to wait a decent interval before you marry Roger Courailles. If I am but injured, go at once to my home, telling nothing of this occurrence, for the purpose of your journey is not suspected. If it is Roger Courailles who suffers, I shall come for you, and we will return together. Only in this way can you save your name and the honor of my house. As you owe me this, at least, you will give me your promise."

"I promise," she had mumbled, and he had gone, leaving her white-lipped,

as, with trembling fingers, she had placed her belongings in her bag. In a terror that had shaken her like a leaf, she had stood at the window, staring at the path that led to the inn. She had never moved from her post until she had seen Arnold come quickly along the stone pathway; then she had clutched the lace curtain at the window into a crumpled mass, and bent her head to it with a sigh of relief.

"Come with me," her husband had ordered, and had not spoken again until they had been in the seclusion of the railway carriage. As she had dabbed helplessly at her eyes to stop a torrent of tears, Arnold had said:

"Roger Courailles is not dead, so do not weep. Only, for a little while, he will not so nimbly carry away other men's wives."

In a grim silence they had ended their journey, and at the castle there had been no surprise at their return together. Only old Nancy, her husband's foster mother, who had always watched her jealously since her coming as a bride, had stopped beside her in the hall to whisper:

"Eh, eh, the pretty bird brought back to its cage!"

Yes, somehow old Nancy had known.

When, that very night, her husband had lit her candle and walked with her to her room, she had been wide-eyed with wonder. How would they live henceforth? Then the waiting maid had left them alone together, and abruptly Arnold had arisen to go to his own sleeping room, drawing the bolt of the door after him.

For days she had kept to her room, feigning illness. Then her husband had entered her room once more.

"You are not ill," he had said. "You sorrow for your lover. To-morrow you will arise and live as becomes my wife and the mistress of my home. I require that of you, and nothing more.

And if you must grieve, do so in secret," he had ended, and had gone.

She had thought that none knew of the bolted door; but one day, as she had stood looking sorrowfully across the lawn, the old nurse had stopped by her side.

"Punished, punished, all are punished in this world," the old woman had muttered, and had shuffled hurriedly away.

Another day, old Nancy had stopped close by her, and she had heard her say: "The locked door, the locked door, and love flown out of the window."

"Silence!" she had commanded. But old Nancy, her mind half weakened by age, was a privileged person, and to complain of her undignified. How the old creature had chuckled behind her toothless gums!

One night she had worn her loveliest gown, and had planned to break the barrier between herself and Arnold. In the drawing-room where they had had guests she had shone in brilliancy to attract him, and, dear God, it must have been tenderness that had been in his eyes! With a new courage, she had contrived to be beside him as he had gone up the stairway. If he would but listen gently, she had thought, she would tell him of her love and her remorse.

"Arnold," she had begun, and had slipped her hand into his. Had he for one second clasped her hand before Nancy had come from behind a sheltering door to linger near them! Arnold had loosened his clasp, to go ahead of her, as if he feared her.

"Punished, punished!" she had heard the thin voice of the nurse, as she had moved away.

It had been while Arnold was away that she had learned the meaning of that swift stab of pain.

"Shall I tell your husband, my poor child?" the doctor had asked.

"I will tell him," she had replied, as if that sad privilege must be hers alone.

She had not told him. Before this truth, that there could be no long life ahead of her, it had not seemed worth while to speak or to struggle for the unattainable. What did it matter for a year or two? More willingly, she had lived the quiet life of the old castle, and more completely her husband had buried himself in his science. She had learned to meet Arnold's gravity with a dignity equal to his own. The few years of waiting had passed.

For the last time she had rehearsed her sad, young life, Alicia knew, and the effort of memory she had made brought the loss of something that was vital to this consciousness of living without life. But when the door of the gun room opened, she heard it, and wondered who had come to look on her. The footsteps grew to a shuffling tread, and she knew it was old Nancy, and felt no further interest.

"Blind, blind!" she heard old Nancy say, and knew that the aged woman must be shaking her palsied head. "As blind in life as you now are in death. Blind as bats, both of you. Eh, eh, a sorry world! None to know the truth but an old simp who is made to sit in the corners."

It was an old woman's ramble, and Alicia did not try to hear more of this accusing farewell. The door had opened again, and, with a hurried tread, as if he came in sudden fright, some one walked forward. It must be Arnold, she thought, Arnold who had been away when she died. He came with a terrible haste to stand beside her shrouded form, and the cold blood seemed to stir about her heart.

"Gone from me, Nancy," her husband said, in a horrified tone.

"Gone, gone, and blind to the end!" repeated Nancy.

"You never loved her," the dead wife

heard her husband reproach the old woman.

"I loved you, my bairn," said Nancy.

"Well, leave me with her," Arnold Dearth said, as if moments were golden things to be seized and cherished.

Alicia heard Nancy shuffle away, and wished that she might see her husband once more. All that her eyes could see was the slant of the candle's light, and the rounded swell of her bosom. Ah, if she might see Arnold's face! For nevermore would she hear his voice. She heard him move nearer to the side of her pall, and saw his shadow as he bent over her. Something hot and wet splashed on her hands. Then Arnold was wiping them with a gentle touch, and she heard his voice.

"Little hands that I might never touch," she heard him say, and felt his fingers press her own. His hand moved over her heart, as if he hoped it might beat with life. She felt the weight of it under her bosom.

"Cold, still heart, that never beat for me," she heard him say, and a thrill of happiness stirred her to know that she was regretted. In one moment more she was listening to a torrent of words, as Arnold yearned over her and pressed her cold hands lovingly.

"Did you not know, my love, how I loved you? Why did you never seek me in my silence and my sorrow? Could you not see I longed to take you to my arms again, to touch your bonny hair, to kiss your warm, sweet lips? What a fool was I that I could not tell you I forgave you and believed no evil of you! How often did I plan to beg forgiveness for my coldness, and did not because I could not bear to see you turn from me, unloving! Now that you are dead, I find my silent tongue can speak to tell you how I loved you."

As he spoke, Alicia listened, with her

senses strained to an excited perception, that she might lose no word, and on her hearing fell another sentence.

"How shall I live without you, now that you have gone from me in silence, before I could make you love me?" Then, as the man's voice sobbed through the silence of the room, voicing his anguish, Alicia prayed in frenzy:

"Oh, God, do not take me now! See, I will try to arise, and you will help me with your power. Ah, no, I cannot rise! Oh, do not take me now!

"If I must go, then let me raise my eyelids, or lift one finger of my cold hands, that he may see and know its meaning. And once, just once, dear God, let me speak! Then I will go willingly, to bear whatever punishment you decree. For have I not been punished? Oh, let me live to speak just once!

"See, as Arnold grieves, I have made a sound in my throat, and his shadow moves, for he thinks it is the creaking of the door. I could speak if he would cease to sorrow, and lean over to my lips. I could speak, I *know* I could speak—to him. Oh, do not take me now! Oh, God, but one short moment more! Not this blankness, this fading of his sobs! I cannot hear him. I *have* been punished. I cannot see the candlelight. I have lost him forever in this shadow—that infolds me—as I sleep—I sleep."

In the long, still room, the wind sighed in through the open window, and the candles threw, now high, now low, their pale, golden light. Sobs shivered on the silence, but Alicia Dear-moth lay with ears as unhearing as the open sides of the glittering visors that rested against the walls.



A WOMAN PRAYS

GOD, make me worthy of the little things:
The thin, new moon, the little bird that sings,
The whimsy dream with ever-ready wings—
God make me worthy of the little things.

Lord, let me feel the glory of the small:
The hidden path, the bud, the breeze's call,
Those little hours that have no spur at all—
Lord, let me feel the glory of the small.

God, make me worthy of the little things:
The little silences that loving brings,
The routine task, the little hand that clings—
God make me worthy of the little things!

GLAD MADONE.



Sandy McGrab, a young tailor, one day reciting his beloved Shakespeare, in the hills above his native Kirkcumbries, is overheard by a young actress, one of a company of obscure traveling players. She recognizes his genius, and announces herself as a fellow professional. Sandy's denial that he is an actor leads her to think that he is the "laird," while he takes her for a famous actress who is expected in the neighborhood. When the truth finally comes out, it serves only to deepen their growing love. Sandy sells his shop to enable her to get to London to keep an engagement upon which her future depends, promising to meet her there to play *Romeo* to her *Juliet*. Then he starts after her on foot. She, meanwhile, makes a great success, but is pursued by the jealousy of her leading man, Rolf Derwent. Sandy arrives in time to frustrate a plot to deprive her of her engagement, and at the same time makes a chance for himself to appear with her.

VI.—THE LAST ENGAGEMENT

A SHADOW hung over Kirkcumbries—one of those almost palpable shadows that seem to lie like a dead weight on one's shoulders and lungs, even on one's very feet, so that movement of any sort becomes burdensome.

The very urchins in Kirkcumbries were listless. Their depths of depression may be judged by the fact that, though the sun had already set in wintry red behind the hills over Glen Every, not one of their freckled faces was seriously dirty, and there was a painful immaculateness about their attire that suggested a very serious state of things, indeed.

Mrs. Saunders, snatching her youngest off the steps of the shop, where he had been sitting in an attitude of sullen dejection, groaned as she looked at him.

"Hoots, laddie, ye maun be sicken-

ing with the rest of them!" she exclaimed bitterly. "Ye hae no been so clean sin' ye were born!"

The youth took the remark as an insult.

"I'm no clean," he muttered, and wiped a challengingly smutty hand over a stubby nose. "I'm no sickening." He burst into a sudden wail. "The laird's deed!" he ended, in tragic explanation.

Mrs. Saunders shook him.

"And what's the laird to ye, ye puir, foolish bairn?"

"He's deed!" her son repeated gloomily.

Mrs. Saunders gave him another shake, and, apparently finding no satisfactory retort to this statement, pushed the scion of the House of Saunders resolutely in front of her into the sitting room behind the shop. There he vanished into a cloud of tobacco smoke which emanated from the three

men seated round the table. Mrs. Saunders coughed, and the three looked up at her with a kind of sullen truculence.

"Ye canna complain, woman," said her husband. "When a man's heart is oot o' him, he maun take his comfort where he finds it. Pass the whisky, meenister."

The "meenister" passed the whisky, and there was a moment's silence, broken only by lugubrious sniffs from an invisible corner of the apartment. Then the minister sat up with a jerk, as if suddenly conscious that some special effort was expected of him.

"I think, gentlemen," he began, in beautiful university English, "I think, gentlemen, it is time that we considered earnestly our reason for coming together. The laird is dead. To-morrow the old castle is to be put up for auction by his creditors. As far as we can see, Sir John Hodge is the only likely purchaser, and——"

"We hae eno' of Sir John," Saunders interrupted fiercely. "There's no been a furriner up on the crag sin' me fathers came to Kirkhumphries. We'll hae no Sir John, thank ye, with his puffed-up English ways. If there's to be a laird, he maun be a Scotchman—and a Highlander, as well," he added hurriedly.

Mr. Firth, the third man, a green-grocer, who hailed all too recently from Glasgow, looked uncomfortable.

"Could ye no step into the breach ye'sel', mon?" he suggested ingratiatingly. "The reserve's no more than three thousand pounds, and they say Sir John's unco careful with the bawbees. He'll no go so high for an auld tumble-down ruin——"

"It's the grandest castle in Scotland," Saunders interrupted, with cold scorn. "And if it were three thousand sixpences, I couldna do it. I'm no sae rich as a' that, mon."

They sighed together.

"The Lord doesna send troubles singly," Saunders went on gloomily. "There's that lassie o' mine fretting her heart out for that feckless Jamie Douglas. He'll no come back, and if he did, he shouldna have her. But she's greeting sore over him. She'll no eat, and the doctor, he's no sae easy in his mind about her."

"The willfu' hussy!" said Mrs. Saunders, from the background.

The Reverend John Andrews shook his head.

"Jamie Douglas is a brave laddie," he remarked, forgetting his English, "and I ken he has a way with him."

"And women maun be queer folk—fra all I've heard say," added the green-grocer, who was unmarried.

Further remarks on the subject were cut short by a sharp rap at the outer door. Mrs. Saunders went out and returned with two letters, which she handed across the table. Whereat, both visitors stared fixedly into the fire. Letters were rare in Kirkhumphries, and it behooved them to show no undue curiosity nor even any consciousness that anything unusual had happened. Over the first epistle, Mr. Saunders snorted; the second, as his guests felt by a certain tension of the atmosphere, contained news of grave import.

"Sandy McGrab is coming home," said Saunders abruptly.

The Reverend John Andrews looked up with his mouth open, as if on the point of uttering some remark, and then apparently changed his mind.

"And who may Sandy McGrab be?" Mr. Firth ventured to ask.

Mr. Saunders' face was wry with disgust.

"Ye maun be very new to Kirkhumphries if ye dinna ken Sandy McGrab," he said crushingly. "Sandy McGrab had the finest homespun in a' Scotland, and he could throw the caber like no other man alive. He's been awa' these

three years, and I'd almost begun to think that nae guid had come o' him. But he says he's come home with a wee bit of a fortune, so I ken he maun hae walked in the ways o' the Lord weel eno'." He paused, and stared reminiscently into the fire. "I'm the only man who's ever got the better of Sandy McGrab," he added.

"And how was that?" asked the grocer, anxious to propitiate.

"He sold me his business for seventy pounds," Saunders answered, with the same dreamy satisfaction. "And it was worth two hundred. I ken it was the week the play actors were here. It was an awfu' time. The de'il ran rampant in Kirkhumphries. An' 'twas after that he gang awa'."

"Who—the de'il or Sandy McGrab?"

"Both," Saunders answered sepulchrally.

The Reverend John Andrews got up and drew his slight young frame to its full height.

"We will hope they did not go together," he said. "And who knows? Mr. McGrab may come in time to save the castle."

"Aye," said Mr. Firth.

"Aye," agreed Saunders thoughtfully.

He did not accompany his two guests to the door, as was his wont, but left it to his wife to perform that hospitable duty. When she came back, he was still staring into the fire, but there was a subtly suggestive change in his position. He had the look of a man about to be photographed, and keenly conscious of the fact.

"Joan!" he said.

"Weel?"

"I'm thinking 'Saunders o' Glen Every' is no sae bad sounding," he suggested.

"Gang oot with ye, mon!" was the impatient retort.

"Or maybe ye'd fancy your daugh-

ter as the laird's wife," he continued, unperturbed.

Mrs. Saunders stopped in the midst of her busy preparation for supper to stare at him.

"Ye maun be fay," she said scornfully. "Sir John Hodge will be laird here. And Jeannie? I ken ye hae better look to your daughter, mon. She's no sae canty as to be thinking o' marriages. Funerals, more likely."

Saunders made no answer, but his silence was weighty. He got up, and, taking down a candle from the shelf, lit it, and proceeded upstairs with the same air of ponderous importance. He tapped at a door on the narrow landing, and then entered, the light held magnificently above his head.

"Weel, lassie, hae ye slept a wee bitie?" he inquired.

The girl on whom the light fell blinked, and shook her head in a dejected negative. She was curled up in a little white bed that looked all the whiter for the shadows with which the low-built room was filled; and her face, framed in dark, curly hair, was whitest of all. There was a melancholy, rather sullen, droop to her pretty mouth, and a big medicine bottle on the chest of drawers completed a picture of poignant suffering.

"I canna sleep," she said. "I'm deeing, father."

Saunders did not attempt to refute the tragic assertion. He sat on the edge of the bed, with the candle balanced on his kilted knee, and considered her solemnly.

"The meenister and Mr. Firth hae been to ask after ye," he remarked.

"Ye maun tell every one that I'm deeing," she persisted, with considerable energy. "For I *am* deeing, father. I can feel it a' over me. One minute I'm cold and then I'm hot. Hold my pulse—it jumps like—like ——" She hesitated, partly for want of a simile, partly to give vent to a

hitherto smothered sob. Saunders held her wrist sympathetically between his two large hands.

"It's unco bad," he admitted. "And to think ye are throwing awa' your young life and a' your bonnie looks for that young scamp, lassie! It breaks your auld father's heart."

She wrenched her hand back, her eyes flashing.

"If it's Jamie ye mean, father——"

"Ah, weel!" He shrugged his shoulders. "Maybe ye're deeing, lassie, and I'd no shake your faith. But he's gone, my girl. Ye'll see Jamie Douglas no more in Kirkhumphries. There's a lassie with muckle siller where he is, so they say, and he was always a lad for the bawbees——"

The invalid sat up vigorously.

"It's no true!" she blazed.

"I had a letter." He looked about vaguely as if he expected it to appear somewhere in the room. "I maun hae burnt it by mistake. But it's true, Jeannie. He'll no come back. And if he did—I ken ye too weel, Jeannie—ye'd no speak to a man who had gang awa' and left ye to dee o' a broken heart."

"Maybe Jamie doesna ken I'm deeing," she sobbed brokenly.

"A' the town kens. And to think there's a fine, honest Highlander a-coming home to fetch ye, lassie, and ye'll no sae much as see him, though Jamie Douglas hae thrown ye over and laughs at ye!"

He spoke with a mingling of pathos and indignation that, coming from his usually stolid soul, was the more effective. Jeannie Saunders stopped crying to listen.

"Who did ye say was coming home, father?"

"Sandy McGrab. He's coming home with a grand fortune, and I ken weel for whom he's coming. Maybe he'll buy the castle up on the crag and be laird. But it'll be unco hard for him,

puir laddie. For it was for you he went awa', Jeannie."

The girl lay very still.

Her father sighed heavily.

"Maybe Jamie'll bring his bride back to Kirkhumphries," he went on, as if following a gloomy train of thought. "Ye maun hold your head high, Jeannie, for she'll hae the laugh over ye, lassie."

Her eyes sparkled for an instant behind her tears.

"I'm deeing," she said. "It canna make much difference to me when I'm deed."

"That's true eno', puir lassie." He patted the frail little hand on the counterpane with a rough tenderness. "Maybe she'll be just sorry for ye then," he added comfortingly.

He waited a moment. Jeannie Saunders had disappeared under her bedclothes, and the convulsive shudderings of the bed suggested that no great degree of consolation had been attained by his suggestion. He got up, with another heavy sigh. "Puir Sandy McGrab!" he muttered. "Puir laddie!"

There was no answer. But there was a momentary cessation in the convulsions.

Mr. Saunders crept from the room, with the air of a man well satisfied.

II.

It so happened that at the moment when Donald Saunders was laying his own plans for the future of Sandy McGrab, his daughter, himself, and Kirkhumphries generally, the first-named was bidding a fond farewell to a lady on the platform of an Edinburgh station. The fondness was open and quite unabashed; the most ill-natured traveler who stumbled over their utter obliviousness was fain to change a scowl into a grim smile of amusement.

"And when you get there, you'll have to go straight up to the place where we

met first," Mary Eliot was saying. "Do you remember, Sandy?—up there in the hills where I caught you reciting Shakespeare so beautifully. You must remember how I played *Juliet* to your *Romeo* from the top of that old rock, and try to imagine it all over again. What triumphs since then! Won't they be proud of their great man in Kirkhumphries, dear?"

He laughed down at her.

"I shan't dare tell them. Don't you know actors are the cheeldren of the de'il?"

"And actresses?"

"Oh, they're worse—much worse."

"Won't you dare tell them that you're marrying an actress person?"

"Not all at once, I'm thinking. They'll have to see you and love you first, dear."

The shriek of an engine whistle hustled Sandy McGrab into his carriage, and a moment later darkness shut out the vision of a sweet, bravely smiling face against a cheery background of posters which announced the advent of a certain famous London company with a long Shakespearean repertory, and Miss ~~Mary Eliot~~ and Mr. McGrab in the leading parts.

Mr. McGrab left Edinburgh as a gentleman of fashion. The morning sun found him striding his way into Kirkhumphries in kilts, and with a suddenly recovered Scotch accent. The intervening years, with all their strange experiences, had slipped away into the winter mists that hid the hills, and it was no other than plain Sandy McGrab, the clothier's son, who came at a gallant swing over the little bridge, crunching the frosty ground under impatient feet, and humming to himself in sheer exuberance of spirits. But there were no brass bands to meet this most satisfactory of returning prodigals—scarcely a friendly face. Even the prodigal himself, busy picking out the old, familiar landmarks—the kirk,

the ancestral shop, the schoolhouse—could not but feel the atmosphere of general depression. He rapped at the door of one Donald Saunders, and no other than Saunders opened to him.

"Ah, mon, if it's no Sandy McGrab himsel'!"

They shook hands solemnly. Sandy McGrab had ceased to smile. He felt, facing that expression of unalterable gloom, that his own joy was inappropriate. Some disaster of which he was ignorant had evidently sunk upon Kirkhumphries. His host led the way into the parlor and wordlessly produced a whisky bottle. They drank in the same silence. Only at the bottom of his second glass did Saunders recover his speech.

"We're right glad to see you back, Sandy, mon."

"Ye canna be sae glad as I am, Donald."

Another momentous silence.

"The laird's dead," remarked Saunders abruptly.

McGrab made no comment. He knew there was more to come, and he knew better than to hurry matters. Saunders considered his glass and the half-empty bottle with a gloomy, measuring eye.

"The castle's to go by auction," he went on, "and Sir John Hodge is going to buy it."

"That bull-necked gowk of an Englishman?"

Saunders' face lit up.

"The vurry mon," he assented.

"He shallna hae it!" burst out Sandy McGrab. "Not if I have to buy it myself!"

Saunders' face was like the sun breaking through the clouds.

"Ye maun sit down and make yourself at home," he said. "Ye're a true-born Highlander, for a' your low English associates. Shake hands, laddie. I'm sae glad to see ye I canna say. Sit down, and I'll call the auld woman. The Lord has indeed sent ye in His own

guid time, Sandy McGrab." Suddenly his expression darkened again, and he came back slowly from the door, whither he had hurried in his first enthusiasm. "Though maybe ye are too late for some things," he added, in the first tone of mysterious gloom.

McGrab looked up in sympathetic expectancy.

"Business good?" he asked.

"It's no sae bad."

"And the womenfolk?"

"It's Jeannie," Saunders answered laconically.

"She's married?"

"Nay. And she'll no marry noo."

"Why not?"

Saunders turned his head away.

"The lassie's deeing," he said.

There was a moment's appalled silence. Sandy McGrab had risen to his feet. This disaster was something real—irremediable. All his money was useless here. His old playfellow, Jeannie—Jeannie with the rosy cheeks and the teasing eyes and the black, unruly hair—Jeannie dying!

"It's no possible!" Sandy said hoarsely.

"It's true," his host returned sternly. "It's been coming these three years. She's faded like a flower—ever sin' ye went awa', Sandy." He gave a slight start, as if conscious of having made a slip. "Ye maun forget what I said," he insisted hurriedly. "The puir lassie would die of shame if she thought I'd told ye."

"I dinna ken what ye mean," McGrab returned helplessly.

"Maybe ye don't. Maybe ye hae forgotten many things in these three years, Sandy McGrab. Such is the way o' young men. But lassies are no sae quick at forgetting, and my Jeannie canna forget." He passed a hand over his shaggy brows. "Aweel, it's of no guid to greet over the Lord's will. Maybe ye'll be kind to the lassie in her last hours, laddie."

McGrab stood there in the same attitude of paralyzed horror.

"Ye canna mean it, mon!" he stammered. "Ye canna mean that I—that she——"

"I dinna blame ye, laddie," Saunders interrupted resignedly. "Maybe ye didna ken what ye were doing. I was young and foolish mysel' once. But if ye would speak a word with her——"

"Wait!" McGrab held out a desperate hand. "I canna do it noo. I maun hae time to think—to remember. Saunders, I canna believe it."

"And ye'd best forget it. I was wrong to tell ye. Maybe I wanted ye to—show her a bit o' kindness for the sake o' auld times, laddie."

McGrab picked up his tam-o'-shanter. His face was white and hard-set.

"Ye dinna understand," he said. "And I canna understand mysel'. I'll look in to-night, mon. I maun be alone noo."

"There's no sae much time for ye to lose," was the gloomy answer.

Such was the home-coming of Sandy McGrab. He had strode into Kirkhumphries like a triumphant young giant, and he slunk out of it like a hunted criminal. It was in vain that the loved hills, glimmering in a frosty brightness under the winter's sun, lured him with their unforgotten charm. Not even a familiar speck moving swiftly along the sky line of the crags overhead could stir his pulse. Jeannie dying—and dying because of him! A burden of unreclected, mysterious guilt lay on his soul. What had he done three years ago? What had he said? How had he looked? Memory was blank. To his knowledge, there was but one woman in his life—only one woman his thoughts had ever lingered over; but in three years one forgets so much. He wondered—

He walked from morning till late noon, still wondering, torn between remorse and grief and a defiant inno-

cence. Just as the sun began to set, he found his way back to the rock where he had first met Mary Eliot. He had promised himself so much in that return, the revival of so many dear memories; and, instead, he stood there, with his back against the bowlder, frowning miserably out over the glen, striving to remember, cross-questioning, arguing with himself, till in sheer physical weariness a smothered groan burst from his heavy breast.

"Och, Mary Eliot!"

"Och, Sandy McGrab!" came a mocking echo.

He swung around, and there she was as he had so often dreamed of her, perched on the rock overhead, and laughing down at him.

"Sandy McGrab!" she repeated gayly, "I've waited nearly an hour for you, and my nose is red with cold."

"Mary—you here?" he exclaimed.

"I knew you'd come," she answered, "and it was to be a nice, romantic surprise for you. Oh, Sandy, I couldn't wait till you had smoothed all those dear, respectable folk into the right frame of mind about me. I came along by the next train. My dear, I wanted to have my share in your home-coming. Don't you understand—aren't you pleased?"

He held out his hand, and very cautiously she scrambled down to his side.

"Sandy—has the cold made me so plain as all that? You look as if you had had the worst shock of your life."

He made no answer for a minute, but stood with her hands in his, gazing down at her as if he were trying to make sure of her reality. His hold of her brought the tears to her eyes; it was so passionate, so desperate.

"Mary," he said, "an awful thing has happened——"

"I know," she broke in. "I heard at the Macpherson's Arms. The laird's dead, and they're frightened out of their wits that Sir John is going to buy

the castle. But he shan't. You shall buy it, and be a real laird, as—as you were once in your dreams. Do you remember? And I shall be the lairdess—or whatever you call it—and we'll live here in the off season——"

"Mary—it's worse than a' that."

"What? Worse than marrying me—do you mean?" And then the real distress in his eyes reached her. "Sandy, what is it—what has happened?"

"It's Jeannie Saunders," he answered hoarsely and incoherently. "She's dying—and—and it's because of me."

Mary Eliot looked at him in silence. Then she sat down on the rock and drew him down beside her.

"It's very cold," she said, "but I think all this wants explaining, Sandy, and I'd like you to explain now."

He told her, and she listened in grave attention, her eyes dimming as they gazed out thoughtfully over the glowing winter scene.

"And—and I thought I was the only woman you'd ever loved!" she broke in once, with sad reproach.

"Mary, you are! I swear I canna remember even thinking of the lassie."

"Then perhaps you've forgotten quite a lot of things, dear. Think. Did you ever go for long walks together?"

"I dinna remember."

"Did—did you ever kiss her, Sandy McGrab?"

"I dinna remember."

"Did you ever look at her as you look at me sometimes?"

"I dinna remember."

Mary Eliot sighed.

"You don't remember much, dear. I'm afraid you've had a lot to forget."

He threw up his stubborn head.

"Mary, I think I never saw but you in all my life, and this morning I could have sworn it. Now I'm no so sure of anything. I canna understand how it a' happened."

"I do." He had buried his face in his hands, but she drew them gently

away and kissed him. "You see, I fell in love with you myself, without any encouragement from any one. It was just your fatal fascination, my dear—your bigness, your innocence, your primitiveness. I don't blame her—and, whatever you did, I don't blame you. I'm only awfully, awfully sorry."

"I remember now—I brought her a scarf from the gathering," he broke in, with a rush of guilty recollection.

"I don't think it was that," she replied gravely.

They were very silent, seated there, hand in hand, growing with every instant colder and more miserable while the twilight enveloped them.

"And she was so bonnie and gay!" came from McGrab's tortured memory.

Mary Eliot winced.

"And now she's dying." Her grasp on his big hand tightened. "Sandy, we're so happy—we can spare a little of our happiness, can't we? My dear, I'll go back to Edinburgh, and you'll go back to Kirkhumphries. And you'll be nice to her—you'll try to make her happy, too."

"Mary!"

"Why not? She's dying, poor child. Every condemned man has his last wish granted. Let her have hers. Let her think you came back for her. It can do no harm—and—afterward we shall be glad. And if you were really to blame, you will be gladdest of all."

"I canna do it—it wouldna be true."

"Oh, Sandy, you—the actor—not able to act for charity?"

"If you know how I love you——" he broke out indignantly.

"I do. And that's why I ask this of you. Sandy, if she could have loved you so long—she must love you very dearly. And I understand that so well; I shouldn't be jealous. But I should be sad—sadder than I can say—if I thought of her dying with that awful ache in her heart. You see"—she

brushed the tears from her cheeks—"I missed you, too, once, Sandy."

He seized her hands and kissed them.

"You angel!"

"You'll do it?"

"It's hard, but I'd do anything you told me to."

She tried to laugh.

"Don't be rash. We've all our lives yet. And now we'll go back, Sandy. I'll walk with you to the village. And then afterward you're—you're not engaged to me—any more—not till—till you're free——"

"Mary!"

She kissed him solemnly.

"Till our next engagement, Sandy McGrab!"

They walked down the mountain path, hand in hand, in solemn, tragic silence.

III.

The next day two things happened in Kirkhumphries. The first was that Sir John Hodge left for London in a fume, having been outbidden by an "upstart Highlander, who had got his money Heaven only knows where"; and the second was that Sandy McGrab, the new owner of the castle, sat on the edge of Jeannie Saunders' sick bed and held her hand. Such an action could point only one way, and the townfolk wagged their heads.

"Puir laddie! He's waited and worked all these years for her, and the hussy's just playing him against Jamie. When Jamie hears, there'll be muckle bloodshed to pay for it."

And they took care that Jamie Douglas should hear at once.

Meanwhile, Sandy McGrab sat and held Jeannie's hand. It must be admitted that, considering his undoubted histrionic talent, he did it very badly. Every now and then, as he caught sight of the white, still face of the sufferer, he gave a spasmodic squeeze of sympathy, and tears of guilt and pity sprang

to his eyes. When he was not looking at her, she looked at him, rather critically.

"Ye maun get better quickly, Jeannie," he remarked, from time to time, with monotonous cheerfulness.

"Would ye be glad, Sandy?"

"How can ye ask?"

"I dinna ken; I wondered. Father says ye hae waited a' this time to—ask for me. Is that true?"

Sandy McGrab felt that his hesitation lasted an eternity. The affirmative that finally escaped him sounded like a groan. His pity and grief were increasing by leaps and bounds, but they brought him no newer inspiration than the threadbare:

"Ye maun get better, Jeannie."

"I canna get better," she returned doggedly. "I'm deeing." Then, for the first time, she pressed his hand in return, and looked at him with tears in her eyes. "Puir Sandy!" she said. "It's vurry hard on ye. Ye maun find another lassie when I'm gone."

"I couldna—" he stammered involuntarily, driven by sheer panic; and then he got up, the cold perspiration on his forehead. "I'm tiring ye, Jeannie," he said. "Ye maun try and sleep a while."

She nodded, without answering. His agitation was obviously sincere, and her eyes followed him with a kindly compunction as he turned and stumbled uncertainly from the little room. Then, the door having closed, she drew a deep sigh and turned her face to the wall.

So she lay for nearly an hour, the very counterpart of some frail flower dying from exposure to bitter winds. Then a pebble struck against her windowpane, and she sat up. It was now twilight, and only the dim square of her window showed among the shadows. A second pebble, better aimed than the first, flew through the opening and struck against the wall opposite. Jeannie Saunders smoothed her

hair down vigorously with both hands. The next instant a figure rose up outside the window.

"Jeannie!"

She screamed, but not loud enough to be heard outside her door.

"Jeannie!"

"How dare ye!"

There was a smothered curse, the tearing and rustling of the ivy on the wall outside, and then the figure perched itself, breathless and triumphant, on the window sill.

"Jeannie, ye maun listen to me. I must speak with ye. I've been in hell, lassie. Down there in Dumefferie they said ye was deeing."

"I am deeing," she said triumphantly.

"It's no true! I'll no believe it! And they said Sandy McGrab had come home and was claiming ye for his ain—and I had to come. I had a heart sick wi' pride and longing, Jeannie, and I couldna bear it another hour. Ye maun tell me it's no true—none o' it. I maun hae the truth fra ye."

"I'm deeing," she repeated stoically, "and Sandy McGrab hae come home for me."

"You'd no marry him?"

"And why not, Jamie Douglas?"

He held out his hands toward her in an impulsive appeal that nearly cost him his balance.

"Jeannie, ye canna do it! It's me ye love—"

"You, Jamie Douglas! D'ye think I'd love a man who had gone off with another woman, for a' her plain face, for the sake of her siller? D'ye no ken me better than that?"

"I hae gone off with no woman!" he burst out. "It's lies ye hae been listening to, Jeannie. What do I care for any one in the wide world but ye? I went awa' because ye had hurt me sore with your high ways, but I hae had your face in my eyes the livelong day. I haena slept for nights for thinking of ye."

"It's too late," she sobbed. "Ye hae come too late, Jamie. I canna break Sandy McGrab's heart."

"Ye canna love him, Jeannie?"

"Love him? That puir gowk? But he's waited these three years for me. It would be wrong and cruel. And then there's father. He's sae pleased! Sandy McGrab hae bought the laird's castle, and we shall be rich, grand folk. Father'll no listen to talk of ye, Jamie."

"Is the castle and the fine clothes and a' more to ye than me?" he begged, in angry pain.

"Ye ken weel eno' I'd rather hae ye and no roof to me head, Jamie Douglas," she answered, between her sobs.

"Me ain lassie!"

"Jamie!"

"Ye're no deeing noo."

"I'm no sae deeing as I was," she admitted indistinctly, from amid the tear-stained pillows.

He managed to lean forward, and, fumbling over the counterpane, his hand found hers.

"I'll win ye yet, lassie," he whispered huskily.

She rubbed her hot, wet cheek against his hand.

"Ye canna do it. I willna break puir Sandy McGrab's heart."

"And ye shallna break your ain and mine as weel, Jeannie. I'll no give ye up to any mon living——"

"My bra' Jamie!"

They both wept. The ivy groaned dangerously under Jamie's precarious foothold, and caused the occupants of the lower chamber to glance up in some surprise, for the night was a calm one.

"Sounds as if some one were oot in the garden," said Donald Saunders suspiciously.

"It's the meenister coming up the path," his wife announced from her place at the window.

Sandy McGrab stirred uneasily. As the door opened briskly, he half turned, and the eyes of the newcomer immedi-

ately rested on his face. The Reverend John Andrews hesitated on the brink of an impulsive exclamation, but McGrab's scowl silenced him effectually, and he merely bowed.

"Mr. McGrab?" he observed tentatively.

Sandy acknowledged his own identity with a nod, and Saunders glanced curiously from one man to the other.

"I didna ken that ye had met," he said. "The meenister was no here in your time, Sandy?"

"We met in London—in the kirk," the minister explained lamely.

"Ye could hae said so before, then," Saunders retorted, with some ill humor.

He got up to fetch the hospitable whisky bottle, and a moment later, called for his wife from the adjoining room. She followed him, and their voices, confused in heated altercation, successfully drowned the sound of a heavy thud in the cabbage bed outside.

The Reverend John Andrews slipped into his host's vacant chair, and leaned forward eagerly.

"Sandy McGrab," he said, in a hurried undertone, "are ye here as a wolf in sheep's clothing?"

"I dinna ken what ye mean," McGrab retorted sullenly.

"Ye ken weel eno'. These puir, honest folk—do they ken what ye are—a play actor—a mon on the broad road that leadeth——"

"They'll ken in guid time," McGrab interrupted.

"A mon who is to marry a play actress——"

"It's no true—I mean——" He broke off, aghast at the horrible significance of his own words. "I mean I'm no engaged to any woman——" he stammered.

"Ye swear it, Mr. McGrab? Ye ken the little girl in London who was Miss Eliot's dresser? Weel, she's my wife, noo, and it was she who told me you were to marry Miss Eliot. And then

when I heard you were here, and after Donald Saunders' daughter, I couldna understand——"

"Ye maun understand as best ye can," McGrab answered between clenched teeth. "I'm a free mon, meen-ister."

"I'm glad to hear ye say so, Mr. McGrab. I apologize." His gaunt, earnest young face softened. "I'll say nought about the play acting. Maybe if ye broke it gently to them, they'd bear with ye. And then when they see their Jeannie grow bonnie and strong again——"

"Eh?" said Sandy McGrab.

"I said, when she grew bonnie and strong again——"

He got no further. At that moment, Mrs. Saunders made her reappearance, the whisky bottle in one hand, a lighted candle in the other, her bony face white with alarm.

"There's some one on the stairs," she said faintly. "Either it's a ghost or it's——"

She turned, with a start. The door had opened, and Jeannie Saunders stood on the threshold. She was fully dressed, and there was a faint, excited flush on her thin cheeks.

"I'm no sae sick any more, mother," she said. "I've come down to supper."

She looked at Sandy McGrab, who had sprung to his feet, and stood, white and aghast, staring at her. Then her eyes dropped, and she blushed.

IV.

That was how matters stood when Sandy McGrab went to bid an eternal farewell to the only woman he could ever remember having loved. She was seated by the fire that had been specially lit for her in the best parlor of the Macpherson's Arms, and her fair, cruelly drawn young face was buried in her hands. Sandy McGrab held himself in his place opposite her. The de-

sire to seize her in his arms and carry her off in spite of everything was very strong in him, and as he saw an irrepressible tear creep through her fingers and splash down on her knee, he had to look away to keep the mastery over himself.

"It's an awfu' thing we've done between us, Mary," he said brokenly. "It's a wicked thing. We meant well. We wanted to make the lassie happy, didn't we? But not at this price. And now we've got to pay, whether we like it or not."

She nodded. "There's no way out, dear. We might have foreseen what would happen. You're all she wanted, and now that she has you, joy has given her back health and strength. We ought to be glad. That's what is so terrible! I can't——" She broke off, with a husky little sob. "Oh, Sandy, it's all like a dream—our life in London, our triumphs, our hopes! And now you're back in Kirkhumphries. It's got you—and—and I've lost you! I'll have to face the audience alone, and you——"

"Mary, my darling——"

She rose and stood facing him, with a quiet dignity.

"You mustn't. That's all over. You—you had better go, dear, while we can both bear it."

"I canna do it. I maun see you again."

"To-night, then—at the rock—for the last time——"

He held her hand. His grip hurt her, though the pain was lost in the greater agony of that frigid parting.

"If a kind chance should end our folly, I'd marry you out of hand—in twenty-four hours," he said hoarsely. "I'd never wait again, Mary; I swear it! We're not safe unmarried. Fate knew how badly we wanted each other and——and——"

"Don't!" she interrupted painfully. "Nothing can help us. Whatever else we do, we cannot break the girl's heart

a second time. We've got to go through with it honorably. Please go—Sandy McGrab!"

He looked at her, and saw that she had reached the limit of her self-control. Without a word, he bent over her hand, kissed it, and was gone.

In the hall of the little inn he stumbled against a quietly dressed little woman, who turned and looked after him with a puzzled interest. For all her plain attire, she was rather pretty, and very resolute looking, and when Sandy McGrab had vanished out of sight, she nodded to herself, as if at some newly formed determination. Without hesitation, she knocked at the door of the room McGrab had just vacated, and walked in.

"Miss Eliot?" she said.

The woman seated by the fire, with her face hidden in her hands, sprang to her feet, a quick anger burning the tears dry, but the next instant her expression softened to a questioning recognition.

"Surely——" she began.

The other nodded.

"Yes," she said. "It's I, Miss Eliot. I thought perhaps you'd have forgotten. I was your dresser at the Avonia Theater, and I was the suffragette whom Mr. McGrab tried to save from the clutches of the law. I got two months. Don't you remember?" She laughed gayly. "And now I'm a Scotch minister's wife," she ended, with a grim little flash of humor.

"How did you know I was here?"

"Oh, Miss Eliot, how can any one not know things in Kirkhumphries? And when I heard you were here, I had to come. I had to see you, even if I had to walk right in without knocking. You see"—her bright eyes twinkled—"I'm a suffragette still."

"If there's anything I can do for you——" Mary began.

The Reverend John Andrews' wife came a step forward.

"I want to do something for you," she said earnestly. "I'd like to do something for a man who tried to help me once. And I want to know why Mr. McGrab is to marry Jeannie Saunders?"

"How dare you——"

The visitor waved the interruption aside.

"I'm not afraid of anything or anybody—not even of John Andrews," she declared; "and I'm not afraid of doing the right thing. I want to know why Mr. McGrab is to marry a woman he doesn't care twopence for?"

"He—he does."

"He doesn't!" was the unperturbed answer.

"How do you know?"

"Because he loves you," returned the one-time inmate of Holloway. Mary Eliot caught her breath. "And I want to know why Jeannie Saunders' marrying a man she cares less than twopence for?" her visitor continued.

"She does—she—she was breaking her heart for him."

"Nonsense!"

"How do you know?"

"Because she loves Jamie Douglas."

There was a moment's silence. Light had begun to dawn in Mary Eliot's haggard face.

"But I—I don't understand," she stammered.

"You would if you knew Donald Saunders. Hasn't Mr. McGrab bought the castle? Doesn't that suggest anything?"

"But the girl?"

"She did it first of all to spite Jamie, and now she's going through with it—to save Sandy McGrab from a broken heart."

The two women looked at each other steadily. Then Mary Eliot laughed, laughed until she cried; and finally she put her arms around her visitor and kissed her.

"Come and sit down by the fire," she said, "and help me think."

The wife of John Andrews stayed an hour, and when she went away it was with a peculiar little twinkle in her bright eye. Sandy McGrab, standing on the little bridge that crosses the river, saw her coming, and fled away up into the mountains. He had not recognized her, but she was a human being, and he felt that he could face no one. For the last hour he had been trying to enter Donald Saunders' house to pay his dutiful respects to the woman he was to marry, but his heart had failed him. It was too sore with grief to feign happiness, or even a pitiable show of affection.

Once, as he had lingered at the turning of the highroad, he had seen Jeannie Saunders come out of her father's garden. No one would have thought that a week previous she had been "deeing." She had been wearing her Sunday best, and there had been bright roses in her cheeks and a new light in her eyes. That was his work, Sandy McGrab thought. That was what he had done for her. It was terrible that he could not rejoice. He could only think of Mary Eliot—Mary Eliot, whom he had loved and lost. And so he had hidden while his bride to be had hurried past him.

Up in the hills, he wrestled with himself—a last, desperate conflict between desire and honor. He prowled miserably around the castle that was now his, and thought of the woman at whose feet he would have laid it and all he had. He thought, too, of those brilliant evenings—now never to be again—when they had acted together before tense audiences; or, rather, not acted, but lived, as *Romeo* and *Juliet*, as *Anthony* and *Cleopatra*, as all the world's great lovers. He must leave the stage, if he was to marry Jeannie Saunders. So much was clear. He knew Donald Saunders' opinion of play actors; no

daughter of his should ever marry such an outcast. For an instant, temptation loomed up at once hideous and beautiful in his path, and then Sandy McGrab turned his back on temptation, castle, and hopes, and went back to Kirkhumphries, stumbling over the stony path because his eyes were too blind with pain to see.

He entered Donald Saunders' house with head erect and resolve fixed. He would marry Jeannie Saunders while he had the strength; he would cancel his theatrical engagements, and the past should be buried.

"A long farewell to all my greatness," was Sandy McGrab's tragic leave-taking of the past as he pushed open the door of the sitting room. But there he paused, conscious of disaster. Donald Saunders stood with his back to the fire. His wife was crying, with her face in her apron, and the Reverend John Andrews stood by the table in his best pulpit attitude, erect, severe, terribly in earnest.

"Ye hae come in the nick of time, Sandy McGrab!" he said severely.

"Aye," said Donald Saunders. He brought his clenched fist down thunderingly on the table. "Ye thieving, meeserible skellum!" he burst out. "Ye son of the de'il!"

"Sir!" said Sandy McGrab.

"Is it no true that ye be a play actor—a low, godless wastling of a play actor?"

Sandy McGrab drew himself up. The first momentary inclination to apologize, explain, retract was gone. His pride in his calling was ablaze, and shone through his angry eyes.

"Sir, I am an actor," he said haughtily.

"Is it true that ye are in love with a common actress woman? That ye were with her this very morning?"

Thereat Sandy McGrab strode down upon him, and Donald Saunders quailed in spite of himself.

"Ye maun be careful, Saunders," McGrab said, from between clenched teeth.

"And ye dared to come after my daughter!" Saunders retorted, with waning fierceness.

"Ye ken weel eno' why I did it," said Sandy McGrab.

There was a moment's silence. Donald Saunders avoided the eye of the Reverend John Andrews, or he might have seen that that gentleman's severity was now mitigated by a most unprofessional beam of amusement. Sandy McGrab saw it, and wondered.

"If ye hae done this, meenister," he said sternly, "then the life and happiness of a young and innocent lassie is on your shoulders."

"Ye're sure of yourself, laddie," said the Reverend John.

"I'd rather me daughter married that feckless Jamie Douglas than such a mon as ye be," Saunders added, as a culminating insult.

And then the door of the best parlor opened, and Jeannie Saunders entered, leaning on the arm of Jamie Douglas himself. There was a moment's paralyzed silence. Even Mrs. Saunders left off her monotonous sniffs of despair. Jeannie Saunders glanced from one to the other. She looked as pretty

as her companion was proud and triumphant.

"We're married, Jamie and I," she said simply. Then she turned to Sandy McGrab, and her voice broke. "Sandy," she said tearfully, "ye maun forgive me. I wouldna hae done ye wrong. But I tried, and couldna love ye as ye wished. Ye maun find another lassie——"

And then Sandy McGrab did an unexpected thing: He caught her in his arms and kissed her twice—once on each cheek.

"Ye're the sonsiest lassie in a' Scotland, bar one," he said. "And ye may hae the auld castle as a weddin' gift," he added wildly.

"Sandy McGrab, where are ye going?"

The Reverend John Andrews restrained her with a gentle hand.

"He's no going to cut his throat," he assured her. "He's only going after the other lassie." He went out into the garden. "Ye maun let me do the marrying of ye, Sandy McGrab!" he shouted after the retreating figure.

But Sandy McGrab neither saw nor heard.

He raced up the mountain path to where Mary Eliot awaited him.





The Common Clay

ALMA MARTIN
ESTABROOK

THE train ground on steadily toward the west.

In the *Octavia*, a woman, bending forward with a sudden, swift movement, drew the blinds of her window, shutting out the landscape through which they were passing. Beneath the restraint of her manner and the weariness of her eyes a passionate distaste of it was visible.

At each revolution of the wheels, she was being borne farther from her own world of beauty and tastefully chosen occupations and diversions into this other world which held for her an unthinkable ordeal, its stark unloveliness arousing in her an inevitable resistance.

She checked a deeply willful sigh, steadying the gracious curves of her lips—lips quite unused to sternness or to the stifling of emotion. All the fine lines about her eyes and temples had come from smiling and the serene contemplation of life and the brightness of her garden, with, perhaps, an occasional neuralgic headache to emphasize them.

The brute facts of sin and shame she had never denied, but she had not seriously considered them, since, in her own quiet pursuits and their attendant happiness, she had found both employment and content.

Then all at once she had come face to face with them, not in those remote and humble quarters to which she had sometimes gone upon brief missions of charity, where, drawing back, she might

have avoided their defiling touch, but inescapably in her own domain.

What had happened might, she would have admitted, have happened conceivably, but not probably, to her friends and acquaintances, but never to her.

Now she journeyed, bewildered and rebellious, to meet its consequence. Withdrawn within herself, she sat, her thoughts outspeeding the train as they raced to that from which her whole sensitive being shrank.

There was, at the time, but one other occupant of the car, a woman in an eccentric gown with a wide-hipped effect and the latest sartorial caprices. Her blond hair, which bore the marks of both bleaching fluid and curling iron, was wound about her round head in such startling profusion that any other neck than her very stout one must have refused to bear the weight of it. Her fingers lacked the length that her neck lacked, and, like it, seemed to have tried to make up in stoutness. They were covered with rings. All the recent accessories to the feminine toilet were conspicuously present, and her sophistication was completed by the lorgnon, which she handled quite as was to have been expected.

What was *not* to have been expected was her glance of simple clarity and candor. Her wide blue eyes were as full of twinkling cordiality as the eyes of a child, or of a very old person who has found that life is good.

She was, for the moment, engaged in slapping with her time-table at two or three stray flies that buzzed about her window, the incessancy of her attack reverberating through the car.

Elizabeth Wolford, from her side of the coach, glanced at her with a satirical thought as to her lack of consideration. What, she argued, could be expected from a person who looked as this woman did? Her lack of grace and breeding, the wretched taste and exaggeration of her garments, her blondined hair and coarse, heavily powdered skin, her blunt, bejeweled fingers, her ridiculous assumption of worldly airs, and her thick, impossible voice, alike offended all the prejudices that were inherent in the other woman.

Mrs. Wolford's first quick glance of appraisal at the beginning of the journey had warned her to refrain from the usual courtesies that one extends instinctively to one's fellow travelers. Given the slightest encouragement, the woman would become an unmitigated bore, Mrs. Wolford had thought, and had accordingly held herself completely aloof.

The train began to slow down at the moment, and the woman arose, patting her hair and puffing out the wideness of her hips. Glancing across the aisle, she remarked, with an amiability that showed the restrictive touch of the other woman's well-bred, but unmis-takable, indifference:

"We stop ten minutes. The air outside is great. Not goin' to get off for a breath of it?"

Mrs. Wolford continued to sit behind her drawn blind. It amused her to think what her husband would have said at the thought of her pacing up and down in perfunctory comradeliness with a creature so extraordinarily gowned and coiffured.

What Horace Wolford thought had always been of much more importance to her than to the world in which he

lived. Gentle and faded, of rather overrefined instincts and unquestionable tastes, he had lived pacifically among his neighbors until, overcome gradually by the angina pectoris from which he had always suffered, he had died several years previous, leaving, except in the heart of his wife, a memory scarcely more defined than the memory of a cloud at sunset, or of a mist rising from the sand.

"Horace," a distant relative, had once humorously paraphrased, "is, methinks, but Richard sick."

Richard was Mrs. Wolford's brother, now only a few weeks dead.

There had lacked no ruddiness in Richard, nor lurked any suggestion of cloudy tenuousness. A thoroughly corporeal person he, hearty and keen for life, and emphatic in his determination to get from it all it would yield.

His sister had adored him, and in a rather amusedly good-natured way he had returned her devotion, although he had gone but infrequently to her house until after his brother-in-law's death. Then he had often run out for Sunday when he could manage it.

He had been on his way to her when the accident had occurred that had caused his death, along with his chauffeur's, and he had died in the chamber dedicated to him, she sitting beside him in the twilight that always seemed so much quieter and so much more rarefied at Wolfordonia than anywhere else, while, with his last breath, he had told her that which was bringing her West.

Behind the drawn blind of the *Octavia*, she was thinking of that night. She had thought of little else since then. It was not that Death had come up through her garden's fairness and entered her house, for Death had entered it before and she had met him intrepidly. It was life, in its first terrifying revelation, that had left its indelible impression upon her soul. That Richard, her brother and inheritor with her of price-

less memories and traditions, Richard, in whom she had trusted as in Horace himself, Richard, with their father's winning charm and their mother's delicately cut features, Richard, sole bearer of the proud old name, that Richard — She covered her eyes with her slender, unjeweled fingers.

The woman from across the aisle entered the car at the moment.

"Headache?" she queried sympathetically. "It's just as well you didn't go out, then. It's sickenin' in the sun."

She settled complacently into her seat and began to pop sweets from a chocolate-colored box into her red mouth.

Watching her covertly, Mrs. Wolford thought: "If I were only made of clay, like her, how differently I should meet this!"

That such women loved lightly, sorrowed lightly, and spent little time in regretting, she did not doubt. Phlegmatic creatures, of coarser grain, holding honor carelessly, and thinking little of integrity, lacking all the refinements of life, how dull were their emotions and how atrophied their consciences!

A stifling heat filled the car. It began to grow dark, and ominous rumblings reverberated among the lava-strewn hills through which they were passing.

The woman across the aisle arose, with a nervous gesture, and came toward Mrs. Wolford.

"It's goin' to storm somethin' fierce, or I don't know the desert," she said. "I believe I'll sit with you a while. I hate lightnin'."

The storm came swiftly, with the terrific intensity of desert storms. While it lasted, the two women talked but little, merely sitting side by side, their eyes meeting occasionally in reassurance or alarm. But as the thunder ceased and the rain slashed steadily across the windows, the stranger began a conversation, out of an irrepressible friendliness and loquacity.

"Live out here somewhere, do you?" she queried.

Mrs. Wolford answered, with a shiver of recoil; and her companion continued: "*We* live in Yulo, Mr. Humphrey and me. I go back East once or twice a year to keep next to things, but I don't stay. 'Not me,' I says to my folks. 'The West's good enough for me, and little old Yulo is about the best spot in it, to my thinkin'.' Not that we chose Yulo because of its literature," she laughed. "These towns out here are all on the job when it comes to slingin' ink and adjectives. You'd think, to hear 'em, that each little board of trade was boomin' its own private heaven! But their circulars didn't have anythin' to do with us. We was huntin' a place where a man with one busted lung could live and make a livin', and it struck us that Yulo was the place."

As mute testimony to the wisdom of their choice, her glance seemed to gather up and proffer the jewels on her fat fingers, her vivid and expensive gown, and all the costly accessories of her toilet.

Obliquely she studied her seatmate for an instant.

"It takes the starch out of you to be up against a thing like that—health gone, punch gone, job gone, a doctor shakin' his head at you and sayin', 'Go West. Go to Colorado or Wyomin' or Arizona, but *go*!' And you a plain fool about Pittsburgh! Take it from me, you feel as helpless as a dumb mute'd feel if somebody set him to teachin' elocution."

Her smile had in it a wrench of the old pain, but her eyes were dry and bright.

Elizabeth Wolford's look seemed to invoke some power to end the conversation. Dismally she stared out at the rain-sodden land, resigning herself, with very ill grace, to the enforced companionship.

"The worst of it was that Joel—Mr. Humphrey—had been takin' care of his father and mother and Jimmy—a kid he'd picked up and was tryin' to make somethin' of, somethin' he hadn't had a chance to be hisself—and it seemed pretty tough to go back on the old folks and throw the boy into the street again. Say, it did look black—four people dependin' on a sick man!"

Mrs. Wolford's lips compressed themselves. The unsolicited confidences of such people!

"Poor Joel was a month or more tryin' to turn up somethin'," Mrs. Humphrey continued, "but it wasn't any good. So—so—he opened a game."

Her blue eyes besought her companion to understand, but the distinguished face, with its fastidious delicacy of coloring and outline, continued to avert itself.

"A game?" Elizabeth Wolford repeated.

"A gamblin' place. I thought it'd kill me. And it sure didn't suit Mr. Humphrey any better than it did me. For if I do say it myself, they don't many of 'em come any finer than him. But as he said to me, 'Annie, see here! It's not what we want to do in this world, but what we have to do. How, in God's name, am I to take care of you all on any job that's offered me? I've got to start the game, or you'll some of you starve. You can't go back on your own flesh and blood, can you?'"

This echo of the cry that had been wrung from her own quivering heart stirred the other woman faintly.

"You can't go back on your own flesh and blood! You can't! *You can't!*"

Unceasingly it had reverberated within her ever since her brother had made his dying confession to her. Little else than this did she hear of the sordid details relative to the reshaping of Mrs. Joel Humphrey's life. She became conscious that the recital had ended, and

that a dead, strained silence had fallen, but she did not try to end or ease it. Why seek a common tongue with one who could pour out her heart to a stranger, she would have argued.

Her one wish was to be left alone. But the rain, like a gray curtain flung across the window, shut her in with this impossible person sitting elbow to elbow with her.

The impossible person spoke again. She said: "So, after a while, I was able to look folks in the face again, for it seemed to me that Joel—Mr. Humphrey—was doin' the best he could. But when we didn't have any children, then it come to me that it was a judgment sent on us. Just that and nothin' more."

"You felt children so necessary?" The narrow gray eyes, with the fine lines about them, met the wide blue ones. The blue eyes grew bigger and darker; they seemed to cry out: "Necessary! Aren't they life and the meaning of life?"

Annie Humphrey's lips only stammered incoherently, however, and the color rose in her stout neck and spread to the roots of her so sadly abused hair.

"We're different, I guess, you and me," she faltered; and went on, with a little, apologetic laugh: "Why, I'd rather go to an orphan asylum any day than to the best show on the road! Whenever Mr. Humphrey and me used to start out for a holiday, he'd say: 'Well, where'll it be this time?' But we'd both know we'd end at some orphanage."

Again Mrs. Wolford ceased to listen. Leaning her cheek on her hand, she watched the gray sands and the grim buttes, and tried to forget that which gnawed at her own heart.

"One day," Annie Humphrey continued, with the soft breathlessness of one in a temple's sanctuary, "we found ourselves at the gate of a place in the city that wasn't run regular—one of

those places that sort o' thrive on disgrace, you know. There was about sixteen kids there, and among 'em was the cutest little thing you ever saw, with a square chin, and gray eyes that was bubblin' over with life, and her not two years old yet! When I took her in my arms, she hugged me as if she'd never let go, and Joel said, kind of queerlike: 'Why don't you bring her along home, Annie?' But I was afraid of the blood in her. The father's, you understand; not the mother's."

Elizabeth Wolford asked no questions, nor made any comments. To herself she was saying: "How such people gloat over the details of shame!"

"He belonged to an old family back East—one of the proudest, they told us. But why any family should be proud of its age is more than I can see! Old families is like old houses, it seems to me—they put up a good bluff for a front, but look out for the foundation! Ten chances to one it's rottin' away."

Mrs. Wolford's pale face had grown paler. The impossible recital must be ended. She half rose.

Engrossed in her narrative, Annie Humphrey went on, unheeding: "I guess you think I ought to have got used to things, livin' in Yulo—and a minin' camp does turn out some pretty poor specimens; but, believe me, mighty few of 'em are mean enough to do what that baby's father did—leavin' the poor girl mother to come West and bury herself, while he stayed on, doin' the society stunt, enjoyin' himself, and swaggerin' about his father, while his own kid starved in that hole of a maternity home."

"My head—I must try to sleep——"

"I've run on enough to split your head," Annie Humphrey exclaimed contritely, rising at once. She lingered for a moment, however, leaning on the arm of the seat. "There's not enough

brimstone in hell for a man like that, as I guess he's found out; but the Lord knows the kiddie wasn't to blame for his blackness. So I took her, all right, in the end."

"He is—is dead?"

"Just the other week. Killed in an automobile accident."

Silence fell upon them for a moment. Only the tip of Mrs. Wolford's ear was visible as she stared at the flying landscape.

"It's a queer world, ain't it?" Mrs. Humphrey mused. "I happened to be standin' at the street corner when his funeral procession went by, carriage after carriage, filled with folks who thought they had known him. But I said to myself that mebbe I was the only one that had—me, standin' there at the curb!"

"They told you his name at the hospital?" The voice was sharp.

"Oh, yes. They told me all about the case when I took the baby."

"Are you—are you supposed to keep it a secret?"

"Me! Me shield the name of such a man? Well, I guess not! His name was Richard Jameison, and shame to his memory! The men I know are all square and white compared with him." Her voice ceased on a high, strained note.

Outside spread the gray desolation of storm-touched desert. Inside there were shadows of twilight, and an intangible darkness heavier and more stifling. For a moment neither woman spoke. Then Elizabeth Wolford asked:

"Did you adopt the child?"

"Not legally. Nothin' could have made her more our own. There wasn't anythin' we wasn't ready to do for her—nothin' we didn't do. 'Remember, we've got a devil of a lot to make up to her,' Joel would say. 'If money and love can do it, by Jiminy, it's got to be done!' And mebbe you think we

didn't try! Mebbe you think she ever went out again in the rags we brought her home in! Not with Joel Humphrey on the job!"

Above the chaos of her thoughts and the storm of her emotions, Mrs. Welford heard vaguely: "Money and love. Money and love."

What more could *she* give the child? Could she, in truth, give so much? Oh, no, not now! Not now! It was too soon. If love came, it must be when shame had been overcome and rebellion and all the passionate disinclination of her being.

"We bought the best we could buy," Annie Humphrey was saying, "and I made things up just the prettiest I knew how, and every evenin' I used to dress her, sweet and fresh from the skin out, and put her in her chair by the window where Mr. Humphrey'd see her when he turned the corner comin' home. And it was funny to see 'em, they was so crazy about each other."

Something indefinable touched her voice and face alike. Ceasing to speak, she stared at the porter, who came down the aisle turning on the lights.

"Money and love! Money and love!" With mocking reiteration, the words repeated themselves in Elizabeth Welford's brain. The scales of conscience dipped this way and that. The family name, or an illegitimate child. Which should be shielded? Which should be cherished?

If she had found the little girl in an orphanage—as Richard, so tardily repentant, had thought probable—and pretending a mere fancy for it, had taken it by adoption, as it would have seemed natural she might wish to do in her double bereavement, the matter would have seemed comparatively simple, although Heaven knew it had not seemed so to her when she had set out upon this unforgettable journey. But to discover it established in the hearts and in the household of such people

complicated the situation to the point of the irremediable. For how this woman would spread the story! Tipped with venom and vulgarity, her tongue would wag wherever she went. And, like an acid that eats its deadly way, the tale would run, corroding and destroying all that had been kept fair and untarnished through generation after generation.

It was too tremendous a price to pay for the wrong done! Better a thousand times that the child should be left where she was!

And yet—and yet—

With sharp lucidity she could picture the house in Yulo—a house as cheaply ugly, as gaudily impossible, and as absurd in its pretensions as its mistress. Could she deliberately consign to such a house, and to such untutored keeping, any creature with a single drop of her own blood in its veins? Oh, no, no, no! Every instinct in her revolted.

What should she do? *In mercy's name, what should she do?*

"Is she—is she like her father?" she heard herself inquiring. As if that mattered! Like or unlike him, she was his daughter.

Tenderness, yearning, pity—none of these things entered into her decision; unless it were her tenderness for the dead, her passionate yearning to protect their sacred memories, and pity for herself in her desperate strait.

Of the child's mother she did not think. The girl had scarcely entered her thoughts in all these days since her brother's death. She was answerable only for the child, she would have argued.

That the child should become but a secondary consideration, in the light of the publicity threatened, seemed to her but natural. Yet conscience was like a grim figure at her elbow, inciting her and pointing the inexorable way.

"I must decide!" she cried to herself poignantly. "Oh, I must decide!"

The woman from Yulo had dropped into the seat opposite her. That indefinable something which had touched her face seemed to have concentrated in her eyes into a look of old suffering and of pain that nothing ever quite allays. Tears came silently, dimming their blue, and slipping down her cheeks.

Elizabeth did not see them. She saw nothing but the blur of twilight outside the windows. She was demanding of herself if the silence between her and this woman should remain forever unbroken, or if she should speak now—and, in speaking, bring down about her the wreckage of all that she held most precious, most worth preserving.

Minutes passed. Interminable ages they seemed to her. Twice she tried to speak, and failed. Then at last, like its own echo, she heard her voice in the silent car.

"Suppose the father had sent some one to find the child, would you let them take her?"

"Take her! Take our baby away from us! Joel Humphrey would have killed anybody that tried. She belonged to us by love, and that's stronger than blood or law. No, nobody could have had her."

"But where is she now? Why do you speak as if——"

"She died a year ago," Annie Humphrey said simply. "That's what I've been tryin' to tell you."

Into the silence that fell upon them quivered the breath of the one woman's relief and the half-stifled sobs of the other woman's aching mother heart.

"It'll never be the same for Joel and me again," Annie Humphrey faltered, steadying herself after a moment. "There used to be so much to plan and do, and now there's so little." She threw out her empty arms in mute eloquence, and the other woman looked sharply away.

Then the blue eyes began to shine through their tears. "There was *one* thing I could do, though—I could hunt up the baby's mother and tell her—tell her that—that the kiddie was *all right* now. That's what took me East this time; that, and to see Jimmy graduate in pharmacy. Of course, I could have wrote to her," she reflected; "but things like that is better said than wrote, so I went back."

Her companion arose. It shamed her that her spirit seemed to have taken wings. She said: "They're calling dinner, and you'll want to go. My head will not let me think of eating. I'm going out on the observation platform."

As they stood up simultaneously, Mrs. Humphrey's handkerchief dropped to the floor, and the other woman recovered it.

"You oughtn't to pick up things for *me*," Mrs. Humphrey said deprecatingly.

"But I ought!" Mrs. Wolford exclaimed, and her voice was not very steady.





PLAYS AND PLAYERS

D A FIRST NIGHTER

MISS MARGARET ANGLIN, if she has not made money, has had a fine frolic in the Shakespeare comedies. She opened in New York in "As You Like It"—which was a pity. Her *Rosalind* was neither remarkable nor financially successful. If she had tried her fortunes first as *Katharine*, "Kate the Curst," luck would have been all with her. Both her own performance and her acting version of the "Taming of the Shrew" were liked immensely; and if she had put that robust comedy on in the beginning, it would have had a run.

It must be owned that the play was done as a rattling farce. The first scene between *Katharine* and *Petruchio* was all speed and broadly farcical playing, utterly un-Shakespearean, and therefore lacking in all the nuances of feeling and the poetic quality that show *Katharine* something more and deeper than a shrew, and *Petruchio* something better than a bully.

Katharine's last speech in the play, to the other wives, shows her possessed of both mind and heart, able to reason from feeling, and to think deeply through feeling deeply. However shrewish in the beginning of the play, she is the same woman; she is the nature capable of feeling what is ex-

pressed in that last speech. She has cause for her waspish humor in the jealousy that makes her cruel to her sister, who has all the wooers, and insolent to her father. This is not farce.

"Twelfth Night" went off much better than "As You Like It," although it did not score so heavily as "The Taming of the Shrew." Miss Anglin was appealing and charming as *Viola*. Her supporting company did good work, and the scenery was novel, illusionistic, and delightful. Let us not despair. Some day there will arise again genuine players of poetic drama. Such efforts as Miss Anglin has made to present the three comedies beautifully and merrily will give ambition and a higher standard to many younger actresses and start a few on their preparations to play these rôles.

After two weeks of Shakespeare, Miss Anglin revived Wilde's "Lady Windemere's Fan," with an excellent cast, and gave a successful presentation of the comedy. It must be owned that in close comparison with Shakespeare, Wilde's comedy becomes tame comedy.

The author of "Sweet Kitty Mac-kay," Catharine Cushing, has written another successful comedy in "Jerry," which is Billie Burke's new vehicle. The piece has amusing lines and situa-

tions, but its chief merit as a starring vehicle is that it keeps Miss Burke in the spotlight throughout and enables her to wear a variety of bewitching raiment. "Jerry" is, as Sam Bernard or Lew Fields might say, "a cuteness." It is doubtful whether Miss Burke has ever had a rôle that gave her so much opportunity to be fluffily cute, which is all that her especial public requires of her.

The character is that of a girl who has fallen in love with the man to whom her aunt has been engaged in a desultory, ad-lib fashion for twenty years. The fiancé is now forty and hardly nearer marriage than when he embarked upon the long engagement. Jerry has grown up adoring him, and, upon reaching marriageable years, determines to possess this unsuspecting gentleman. She institutes an amusing and exciting campaign for his capture, which includes numerous ways of trapping him into compromising her, not stopping short of anonymous and erroneous paragraphs in the newspapers and a diabolical automobile spin. Jerry proves, with much cooing and perking and fluffing, that the female of the species is indeed more deadly than the male.

As above stated, the rôle is one of the most successful parts that have ever assisted Miss Burke in making a hit.

In the support there are good parts well done by some well-known players, including Shelly Hull as the captured, and finally captivated, hero, and Gladys Hanson as the maiden aunt twenty years engaged. Alice John, one of the cleverest and most versatile of our younger actresses, endeavors, unsuccessfully, to disguise youth and beauty with powdered hair and dull-hued garments and thereby to convince the audience that she really is Jerry's mother.

The result of her efforts in this unnatural line is to make the spectators wonder—while watching the sparkling

charm and authority of her comedy—why some manager does not present her as *Rosalind* or *Beatrice*.

"Jerry" is likely to keep Billie Burke fluffing a long time in rich content.

"Marrying Money," a new comedy by Bertram Marburgh and Alfonso Pezet, seems to have caught on after some troublous times. The piece has a very slight plot, but an amusing one. The heroine is a young girl who is resolved to marry money. Her parents have lost all their riches, but she is not letting this information get abroad. She decides upon a certain young man, scion of a wealthy house. This young man also decides upon her—for the same reason. He also is the offspring of a father reputed wealthy, but really insolvent; and he woos the supposedly gilded girl to replenish his purse.

Since they both fear premature exposure of their financial condition, they rapturously agree to elope. After the fatal deed is done, they unmask each other at a Swiss hotel where, after a week's honeymooning, they find that neither has the wherewithal to pay the bill.

All they own in the way of rolling stock is the automobile in which they eloped. A French count buys the machine from them, which enables them to pay their bill and sail home to America to begin life together with work and self-denial, just as their parents did in the beginning. A week of marriage has convinced the young people that they really love each other; so they are not too downcast when they discover that they have not married money.

An amusing twist in the story is seen in the fact that the French count—who was considered by the girl to be a penniless fortune hunter, of course, seeking her for her reputed million—is the only man with real money and was genuinely in love with her.

A rollicking farce of some originality

is "A Pair of Sixes," by Edward Peple. It is played by a good cast, headed by Hale Hamilton and George Parsons. The main line of fun is supplied by the circumstances of a wager, which puts the hero to work as a butler. It is almost impossible to tell the story of a farce in a lucid manner, however clear-cut it may be. All one can remember about the central narrative of "A Pair of Sixes" is just that there were screams of laughter from curtain rise to curtain fall. It has prospects of running for a year and a day.

There is a growing fondness for titles of one word. It is as if authors now thought at cable rates. For early production we are promised this assortment: "Drugged," "Maternity," and "Blackmail." The first and third sufficiently, if not pleasantly, suggest their subjects; but "Maternity" might possibly be imagined sympathetically and pleasantly. However, this fond hope is quickly dispelled when we learn that this particular "Maternity" is by Brioux, and that the sociological fund of the *Medical Review of Reviews* is making the production, even as with Brioux's "Damaged Goods." Of course, if it were a comfortable play, it would be called "Motherhood," and carry no germs. Doubtless in a short time some method will be found for suppressing the medical producers and the anti-vice people who indorse vicious plays. At present they are dangerous nuisances.

An interesting event in New York this week is the production at the German Theater—Irving Place—of George Bernard Shaw's "Pygmalion," with Miss Hansi Arnstaedt in the chief rôle. Miss Arnstaedt is leading woman at the Royal Theater of Munich. There is al-

ways real acting at the Irving Place; sometimes very remarkable acting. We do not forget that the Irving Place first gave us Frank Reicher.

The musical comedy of the day is "Maids of Athens," by Lehar and Leon. Lehar once wrote a "Merry Widow." One inclines to the belief that he did not write much of the music which passes for his in the present version.

The story concerns a Greek prince who leads a Jekyll-and-Hyde existence, being—in his off moments—a terrible bandit harassing his own province merely for sport. From all we read about the Balkans recently, we might imagine that just being a Greek prince would be lively enough without the brigandish holiday, but the Prince of Parnes thinks not.

His sister is beloved by a gallant American naval officer. The prince proudly objects. Thereupon, the navy man conceives the idea of winning the princely consent by doing some great deed for the lofty young potentate. What deed so great as the capture of the terrible bandit who thus far has baffled all seekers?

This is a plot fit for mirth, and there is mirth in it; but it lags too much by the way.

The cast is super-excellent, with Miss Cecil Cunningham and Miss Leila Hughes singing wonderfully.

A new Galsworthy play is promised us in "The Mob," with Otis Skinner. Francis Wilson, that gentle and inimitable comedian, probably has a season's success in a dramatization called "The Mystery of Myd," in which he has the aid of an able cast, headed by Amelia Gardner, who proves as expert in non-sensical comedy as she is in emotional.





FOR BOOK LOVERS

ANTHONY THE ABSOLUTE" is the title that Samuel Merwin has given to his latest book, published by the Century Company.

It is a very entertaining and readable story, in spite of the fact that it purports to be the transcription of a diary.

Anthony was a professor of music, and he was endowed with "aural nerves" so delicately acute that he was able to detect the divisions of musical tones that are imperceptible to the most gifted and accomplished musicians—except among the Chinese. So he has undertaken a trip to Peking to study native musical instruments and methods.

His diary, however, shows that he was allowed small opportunity to pursue his researches, for on his journey across the Pacific he encountered an individual named Crocker, who confided to him that his own errand to China was to find his wife and the man with whom she had eloped, and murder them.

On his arrival in Peking, Anthony discovers the guilty wife, living alone in an obscure hotel. He discovers, also, that she has a marvelous voice, supplemented, apparently, by "aural nerves" as delicate and discriminating as his own. The outcome is obvious.

The characterization of Anthony, temperamental, unsophisticated, dogmatic, a physical weakling, is really what gives the story its charm and its interest, in spite of the unreality of Heloise Crocker.

It seems almost a pity that Hodder & Stoughton should have undertaken the publication of G. A. Birmingham's book, "The Seething Pot," after such stories as "The Red Hand of Ulster" and "General John Regan."

The theme is one that has possibilities as entertaining as any of those used by the author in his previous stories if he had only taken the trouble and the time to develop it.

The difficulties and perplexities of a well-meaning Irish landlord in the west of Ireland, in his first encounter with the almost incomprehensible tangle of political, industrial, religious, and local motives and ambitions, offer, to a humorist of Canon Hannay's gifts, an extraordinary opportunity. But he has missed it lamentably.

The story bears what seems, to us at least, unmistakable evidence of hasty, and, therefore, careless, writing, with the result that the characters and incidents are as unconvincing and uninteresting as can be conceived. Altogether, the book is a distinct disappointment.



It is an immense relief to turn from such a book as "The Seething Pot" to one like "The Irresistible Intruder," by William Caine, published by the John Lane Company.

There never was a greater contrast, so far as workmanship is concerned, than is shown in these two books.

If we may judge by results, Mr.

Caine, having selected a congenial theme, set to work upon it with the determination to enjoy it himself at his leisure, and he did it so thoroughly that any one who reads it must, whether he will or no, share in the author's satisfaction.

It is the story of a man of leisure, an Englishman, living with his younger sister in comfort on his property in rural England. He is a bachelor, approaching middle age, somewhat set in his ways; he, therefore, receives his sister's announcement of the prospective visit of a young schoolboy with irritated dismay.

Publius, which is the youngster's rather formidable name, loses no time in establishing himself securely in the affections of the crusty bachelor, and by his chivalry and sportsmanship and instinctive good breeding makes himself a comrade to "Uncle Bill."

Later in the story, Uncle Bill has his inevitable love affair, attended with misunderstandings and disappointments, but even in this, Publius does not fail him.

It is one of the most delightful tales that have come to us in a long time.



"The Reconnaissance," by Gordon Gardiner, published by the Macmillan Company, is an ingenious and reasonably well-told story on a more or less familiar theme.

Its ingenuity lies in the account of how a young trooper in South Africa wins the Victoria Cross by what is apparently an act of heroism in saving a comrade's life, but is really an act prompted by abject fear.

That the young fellow is a decent chap, in spite of his constitutional timidity is shown in his repeated attempts to explain that he is not entitled to the distinction that is, practically, forced upon him. With one or two exceptions, those

to whom he tries to explain attribute his trepidation at the prospect of honors for his act to the traditional modesty of the hero.

At last, however, in desperation at the false position in which he finds himself, he convinces his sponsors that his seeming heroism was actually a cowardly ruse.

The fact remains, however, that he saved a brother trooper's life by overcoming all sorts of dangers and privations, and the question of his motive is satisfactorily disposed of by the rough-and-ready declaration of one of his auditors that Leslie "is a decent young ass, who hasn't found himself."

A rather anæmic young widow, introduced obviously for the purpose of injecting the customary "love element," adds nothing to the interest of the tale.



It needs, of course, no assurance from the reviewer that Zane Grey's new book, "The Light of Western Stars," published by Harper & Bros., is another story of the West.

We had supposed that the old-fashioned cowboy story had finally disappeared, as we have been told the cowboy himself has. But it is a mistake—for here is one with the genuine cowboy brand.

Gene Stewart, a young fellow with an Eastern education and training and Arizona experience, is the hero; a New York society girl, now a ranch owner, is the heroine; and Stillwell, an elderly herder, and "Monty" and Nels, two bad men who have been tamed by the sophisticated charms of the Eastern belle, collaborate in the construction of the plot.

It is a rather long-drawn-out narrative, a fact due to a considerable extent to the garrulousness of Stillwell and the evil machinations of a band of Mexican guerrillas under the leadership of a

handsome villain who rejoices in the unusual name of Don Carlos.

There is little that is new in the story, for it has been told in substance many times since the good old days of Captain Mayne Reid.



As a rule, prize contests of all sorts bring little satisfaction to anybody but the winner. Prizes offered for the best piece of literary work, whether essay or short story or novel, are not usually productive of anything very significant.

There are exceptions, of course, and one of them is "Diane of the Green Van," by Leona Dalrymple, published by Reilly & Britton Co.

This story, in the judgment of Ida Tarbell and S. S. McClure, is entitled to the award of the ten thousand dollars offered by the publishers for the best novel, and, without knowing anything about its competitors, we can still cordially affirm their decision.

The book is an entertaining and well-told story, with no pretense at being anything else. Diane Westfall is a New York society girl, who, wearied with the sham and glitter of high life in the metropolis, retires to her Connecticut farm, which she makes a point of departure for gypsy excursions in a green-covered wagon—going all the way from Connecticut to Florida, pursued by a hero equipped with a tin whistle and a hay wagon.

Complications are developed by the introduction of royal personages from Hondania—a country that has been heard of before, but under other names—some ancient documents, and a pair of antique candlesticks.

The book is written in a sprightly style, the characters are picturesquely drawn, and the local color is satisfactory. Best of all, perhaps, it is neither a problem nor a sex story.

Important New Books.

"The World Set Free," H. G. Wells; E. P. Dutton & Co.

"Quick Action," Robert W. Chambers; D. Appleton & Co.

"Chance," Joseph Conrad; Doubleday, Page & Co.

"Fortunate Youth," W. J. Locke; John Lane Co.

"Quinneys," Horace A. Vachell; George H. Doran Co.

"Rung Ho!" Talbot Munday; Charles Scribner's Sons.

"Penrod," Booth Tarkington; Doubleday, Page & Co.

"Silent Sam," Harvey J. O'Higgins; Century Co.

"Cap'n Dan's Daughter," Joseph S. Lincoln; D. Appleton & Co.

"A Day With Father," Francis E. Leupp; Charles Scribner's Sons.

"The Peacock Feather," Leslie Moore; G. P. Putnam's Sons.

"The Intriguers," Harold Bindloss; F. A. Stokes Co.

"Our Mr. Wrenn," Sinclair Lewis; Harper & Bros.

"The Vanguard," Edgar Beecher Bronson; George H. Doran Co.

"Shallow Soil," Knut Hamsun; Charles Scribner's Sons.



Talks With Ainslee's Readers

SAID a writer in submitting manuscripts to us: "I've been studying your magazine lately, trying to get a line on just what you want. You insist upon every story having a woman in it, don't you?"

We did not know that we did. We tried to think of some AINSLEE's story that did not have a woman in it. Possibly some of Jack London's early Klondike things, but we couldn't be sure. Then we began to wonder if there was any really significant fiction anywhere in which woman did not figure prominently. Homer, Vergil, Shakespeare, Fielding, Scott, Thackeray, Dickens—they all found her indispensable. Let's see, there was "Robinson Crusoe," "Treasure Island," one or two other of Stevenson's, and— But you can certainly count the lot of them on your fingers.

"Why, now that we come to think of it," we told this writer, "most of the stories printed in AINSLEE's have dealt with plots in which woman, if not taking an active part, at least furnished much of the motive. But hasn't that been the case in life, as well as fiction, from the time of the Garden of Eden down? We have no rule about it. If you can give us a story dealing only with man that shall be just as entertaining, just as vital, as one dealing with a complete representation of the race, we'll give it the same consideration we would any other story. But life, it seems to us, with either man or woman left out, must be very much like a telephone with either the transmitter or the receiver missing. Of course, if you can successfully eliminate woman—" We were reminded of an old Oriental tale:

A philosopher, finding that his wife had deceived him, became embittered against her entire sex. He took his infant son with him up to the hills and brought him up in complete ignorance of the existence of woman. The child grew to young manhood, happy and content. But one day, when he was standing with his father a little distance from their hut, three maidens passed and smiled.

"Father," said the youth, staring wide-eyed, "what are they?"

"Devils," said the father grimly, taking him by the arm and leading him away. "They are devils, my son, and spread naught but evil. Put them out of thy mind."

The youth made no reply, but in the days that followed there were times when he would sit for hours at a stretch, dreamily gazing off into the valley. As weeks passed he began to pine and to grow pale. He became moody and would not eat. His father watched him with growing anxiety. At last he went to him and said: "What ails thee, my son?"

"Nothing, father." Then, unable to contain himself longer, he exclaimed, clasping his hands: "But, father—that tallest devil!"

IN this number you have the second big section of "John Tremaine," Marie Van Vorst's splendid novel. If you are not already reading it, begin now. Begin with the opening chapters if you can still obtain a copy of May AINSLEE's. If you cannot, the short synopsis at the beginning of the present installment will enable you to pick up the thread of the story without difficulty. We feel sure that you will indorse our judgment that we could not afford *not* to print "John Tremaine," even though doing so compels us temporarily to abandon our policy of "everything complete in each number." Two more long installments will give you the rest of it.

MRS. GRUNDY is dead. We have been fearing for some time that the end was close at hand, and now definite word comes to us from Edgar Saltus that the dear old lady has at last given up the ghost. "She died of mortification morbus," Mr. Saltus writes, "superinduced by what she saw at a tango tea which mistakenly she had entered, thinking it a sewing class. But previously she had been ailing. She suffered from neglect and also from inflammation

due to exposure. After the slit skirt came in she was never quite the same."

Who could best write her obituary for AINSLEE'S? we at once asked ourselves. Who could review her life and work with the delicate sympathy and understanding due such a subject? Why, who better than the brilliant author of "The Perfume of Eros," "Purple and Fine Women," and "The Poms of Satan"? Who better than Edgar Saltus himself?

Mr. Saltus has made the task a labor of love. In the July AINSLEE'S, under the title, "The Late Mrs. Grundy," he has traced her life from its beginning in Bloomsbury on the day that Byron died, through her unhappy marriage to the villain Grundy, and her subsequent inactivities during the reign of Queen Victoria, down to the sad end.

"No more shall I hear her sainted name," grieves Mr. Saltus, in conclusion. "My cherished friend is dead. *Sic transit gloria Grundy.*"

It has all the brilliancy characteristic of Mr. Saltus' work, and yet, when we have read it—perhaps it is force of habit—we cannot help asking ourselves: "But what would Mrs. Grundy say?"

WE find upon consulting their respective tables of contents that this present AINSLEE'S affords a pretty good indication of the next number. If you have found this one entertaining, you will find the coming one equally so.

For example, Bonnie R. Ginger, who wrote "So Much For Love," also contributes to the July issue. You will, we think, find "The Beneficent Kettle" much sprightlier and every bit as entertaining as the tale you have just read.

Ethel Train, author of "The Ugly Duckling," has written for the coming number a charming story of a diffident old New Yorker. "The Old Cock" is its title.

The next of the fascinating super-women, to whom Albert Payson Terhune introduces us, well illustrates the observation in the foreword to this series that the strange power exerted by these women depends neither on beauty nor feminism. George Sand, beloved of Chopin, De Musset, and a score of others, was not only ugly, but disgustingly mannish. In spite of which Mr. Terhune succeeds in making us feel something of this grotesque siren's inexplicable lure.

Among other features in the July AINSLEE'S will be "Earthquake Weather," a story that gives Neith Boyce ample opportunity for that subtle character analysis for which she is noted. Alicia Ramsey, whose "Their Wedding Day" and "The Marriage Contract" will be remembered by AINSLEE'S readers, contributes a short novelette of Brittany, called "The Death Listener." It is a tale of remarkable strength and atmosphere. Then you will find another of those gripping stories of the North by William Slavens McNutt. "The Brand of God" is one of his best.





Valeska Suratt

Making the Hair Grow, and Other Beauty Secrets

Individualism and Simplicity in Methods of Beauty-Making, Are Strongly Exemplified in the Following Article, by the Foremost Living, Self-Made Beauty of the American Stage, Miss Valeska Suratt. In Characteristic Vein, She Explains the Methods Which Have Produced for Her the Loveliness Which Has Brought Her Fame.

By Miss Valeska Suratt.

MAKING the hair grow was for a long time as great a problem to me, as it is today to thousands of women. There were days when thick hair would come out on comb or brush, and I feared baldness would soon result. After long experimenting, I came to two inevitable conclusions—the hair must have nourishment to keep it in good condition, and the hair roots must be allowed to breathe. Dirt and scurf accumulate on the scalp and no soap can remove it. Dandruff results, the hair becomes starved, looks lifeless and begins to fall out. I came to the conclusion then that the hair needs two things, a shampoo that is not a soap, but a remover of scurf, dandruff and dirt, and a tonic that will strengthen the roots, stop the hair falling and force the hair to grow.

For the shampoo I have found that a teaspoonful of eggol dissolved in a cup of hot water makes the cheapest and best cleanser. It will remove every particle of dirt and scurf, and leave the hair soft and fluffy and easy to do up. I usually shampoo at least twice a month. Twenty-five cents' worth of eggol is enough for a dozen delightful shampoos.

Now for my hair-growing formula: Mix half a pint of alcohol with half a pint of water and add one ounce of beta-quinol (if you prefer use a pint of bay rum instead of the alcohol and water), apply this freely to the scalp, after brushing it generously for a few minutes; rub thoroughly with the finger tips. The beta-quinol will cost you about fifty cents at the drug store and this will make a full pint of the best hair tonic it is possible to make.

As for wrinkles, I used to look upon them much as the drying of an apple skin foretells inevitably the passing of youth that can never again return. Since I have worked out for myself the problem of ridding myself of these check-marks of Nature's bookkeeper, I have changed my mind. Like a splash of a pebble in a pond, the face of the water is ruffled, many ripples widen toward the shore and disappear and the water reflects the sun and the blue sky again as before. It was just a splash, nothing more. My dear readers, there is little excuse now for the presence of wrinkles. The results of this formula have indeed proved this to be the case. Every woman should try this formula, use it freely, and then your face will reflect again the sunshine of youth, and every wrinkle will be just a vanishing ripple, nothing more. In a large bowl pour half a pint of hot water; place bowl in a pan of hot water on a slow fire; add slowly two ounces of eptol and stir constantly until it begins to cream; remove from fire and add a tablespoonful of glycerine, stirring until cold. This will give you a large quantity of fine, white, satiny cream. This will not grow hair. Enough eptol to make the

above formula will cost you about fifty cents at any first class drug or department store.

The complexion may be quickly beautified. A lady once said to me, "I'm sick and tired of trying to beautify my face and arms. I have used about everything this side of the pearly gates and I still haven't a complexion to be proud of." This is the sentiment felt by thousands of women everywhere, and the question is asked, "Is there anything which will actually and in a short time produce the rose-like complexions we see in beautifully colored photographs?" Upon one of my trips through the South, I met a lady who had the most beautiful, peach bloom, velvety complexion I ever saw and she gave me a formula for a cream. I made up some and used it liberally, the results were remarkable. Here it is: Bring a pint of water to the boiling point; add, slowly, one ounce of zintone; stir constantly until all is dissolved; then add two tablespoonfuls of glycerine. Fifty cents' worth of zintone will make a pint of this excellent beauty cream.

For superfluous hair there is nothing which will remove it so perfectly, so magically as simple sulfo solution. It simply dissolves the hair instead of burning it off like pastes and powders, and never irritates, reddens or injures the skin. It can be used on the tenderest skin and no matter how stiff or soft the hair growth. Many women have "down" on their faces and arms. Removed with this simple solution, the difference in appearance will be startling. Druggists charge one dollar an ounce for sulfo solution, and it is certainly worth it.

Blackheads, big and little, should be removed without pinching and squeezing, as this reddens and spots the skin. Get some powdered neroxin from your druggist. Fifty cents' worth will be all you will need. Sprinkle a little on a hot, wet sponge and rub briskly for a minute or two over the blackheads. You'll be surprised how they will disappear in a few moments.

The face-powder and perfume are the finishing touches to every woman's toilet. I have tried so many kinds of powder with such poor satisfaction that I finally worked out a formula of my own and it is now sold in most department and drug stores as the Valeska Suratt Face Powder, at 50 cents for an extra large box in flesh or white. The Valeska Suratt Perfume is sold in cut glass stoppered bottles only (never in bulk), at \$1.00 per bottle.

Every article mentioned in my formulas can be found in most first-class drug stores. If you are not convenient to one, or if your druggist should not have the article you want, my secretary will mail you the article, postpaid, if you enclose the price to me. Simply address your letter, Valeska Suratt, 399 Thompson Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Kindly mark your letter, "For Secretary."

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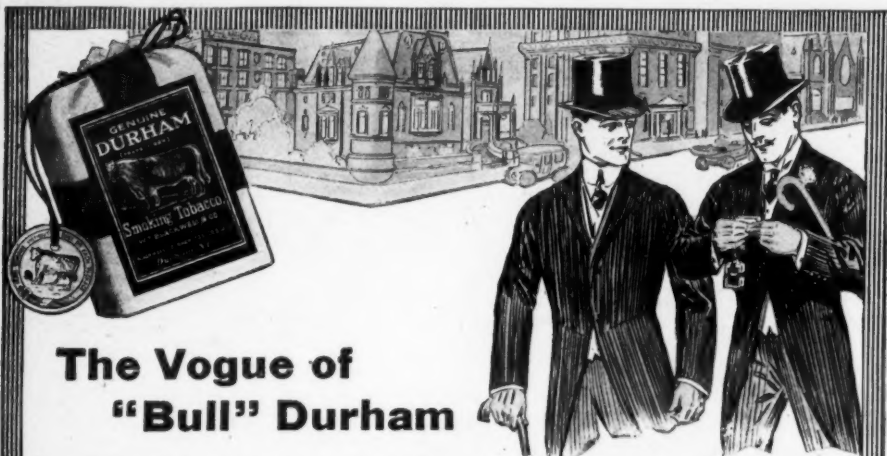
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Mr. Perrin, Cal., took in \$380 in one day—every nickel brought him almost 4c profit. What are you going to do in the future? Just barely earn a living—keep wishing for something to turn up? Don't do it.

LISTEN—take that money you have saved up against the day of opportunity—invest it in a Long Popcorn Crispette Machine, and make fortune smile on you—build up a big paying business. Think of the fortunes made of 5c pieces—street cars—moving picture shows—5 and 10c stores. Everyone will spend a nickel—everyone likes Crispettes—children—par-

ents—old folks. You don't need any experience—you can start anywhere—in a store window, a small store room where rent is cheap, or the kitchen of your home. The Crispette machine and Long's secret formula to the man of limited means is a Gold Mine—a sure way to independence and fortune—to make money from the start.

ALMOST 400% PROFIT

Every 20c invested returns \$1.00 cash—not theory—not guess work—not imagination, but the actual bona fide proven record of profits from Crispette machines from Coney Island to Ore.—from Canada to Argentine Republic.

STOP! You have followed the rut too long—received only what others cared to give. Get on the other side—take only what you want. F. C. Thompson, Ore., took in \$575 in 27 days. E. H. H., Pa., sold over 12,000 rolls in two weeks—just records from letters from Crispette merchants in all parts of the country.

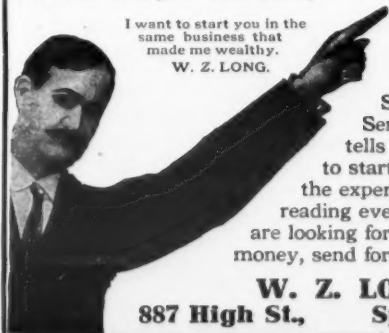


The money barons began with much less advantage than I offer you today. Write NOW for my handsomely illustrated 48 page free booklet, "How to Make Money in the Crispette Business," or

Come To See Me At My Expense

It's unnecessary to write that you are coming—just drop in any time. I will pay your traveling expenses within a 300 mile radius if you buy a machine. I will give you reference after reference from responsible merchants, bankers, citizens—satisfy yourself and then go over the Crispette business with me.

I want to start you in the same business that made me wealthy.
W. Z. LONG.



Go Into This Business NOW—

The big spring and summer trade is waiting for you right in your own city. Send for my free booklet "Dollars & Sense In The Crispette Business." It tells the whole story—how and where to start—how to succeed, proved by the experience of others. It's worth reading even if you don't start. If you are looking for a good thing and easy money, send for this book—TODAY.

W. Z. LONG,
887 High St., Springfield, O.

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Name
Address



"Hello, Agin"

Tommy Asks for A Square Deal

HE lives in New York's stuffy tenement district, the most congested spot in America.

No trees, no grass, not even a whiff of fresh air,—in the only world Tommy knows. Ash cans are his background, and the rattle and roar of traffic his environment.

Tommy's widowed mother is broken with worry; his sisters and brothers are as pallid and frail as he. The winter struggle has sapped their vitality.

They need to breathe something pure and fresh,—a taste of sunshine and outdoor freedom,—an outing in the country or at the seashore.

But between Tommy and his needs stands poverty, the result of misfortune. He must suffer just as if it were all his fault.

And that is why Tommy appeals for a square deal. Nor does he wish you to forget his mother, or his "pals" and their mothers,—all in the same plight.

This Association every summer sends thousands of "Tenement Tommies", mothers and babies to the country and to Sea Breeze, its fresh air home at Coney Island. A dollar bill, a five dollar check, or any amount you care

Tenement Tommy

to contribute, will help us to answer Tommy's appeal.

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It will open a world of new summertime pleasures to you. The "Old Town" is strong and safe, swift and graceful—preferred by experienced canoeists. 2000 canoes in stock—agents everywhere—send for catalog.

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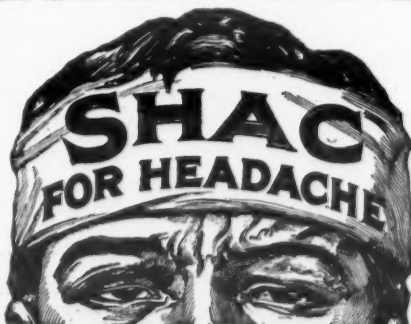


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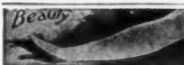
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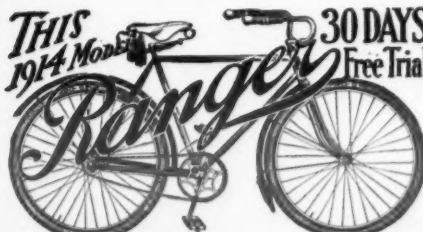
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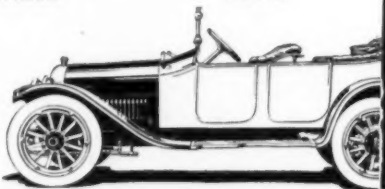
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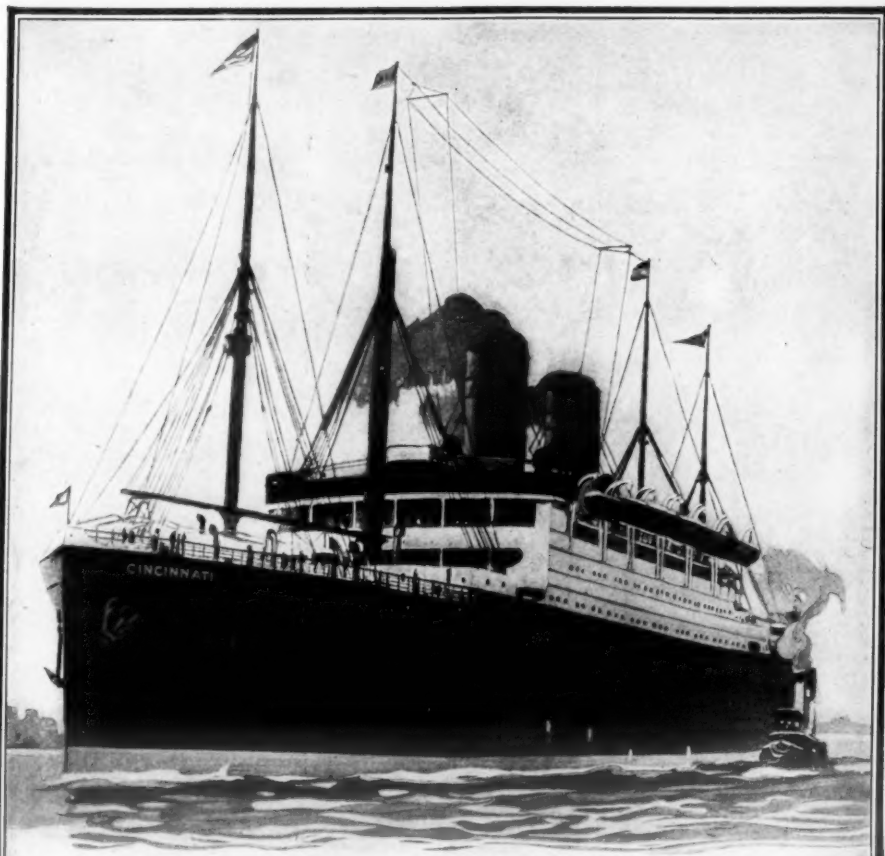
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Watch the "Nobby Treads"

On Fifth Avenue, New York
On Commonwealth Ave., Boston
On Broad Street, Philadelphia
On Pennsylvania Ave., Washington
On Euclid Avenue, Cleveland

On Michigan Avenue, Chicago
On Woodward Avenue, Detroit
On Broadway, Denver
On Van Ness Ave., San Francisco
On leading streets of cities and towns everywhere

On Every Thoroughfare

see the tremendous number of "Nobby Tread" Tires on cars everywhere—you will find that men who have owned two, or three, or four cars—men who have experimented—use "Nobby Tread" Tires.

If you are buying your first car this Spring, have it equipped with "Nobby Tread" Tires. Start right,—take the advice of these veteran motorists,—and save expensive, useless experimenting.

"Nobby Tread" Tires

are now sold under our regular warranty—perfect workmanship and material—**BUT** any adjustments are on a basis of

5,000 Miles

Thousands upon thousands of veteran motorists now use "Nobby Tread" Tires on their front and rear wheels through all seasons, because they are such phenomenal mileage tires and real anti-skid tires.



United States Tire Company

DO NOT BE TALKED INTO A SUBSTITUTE—Your own dealer or any reliable dealer can supply you with "Nobby Tread" Tires. If he has no stock on hand, insist that he get them for you at once—or go to another dealer.

NOTE THIS:—Dealers who sell UNITED STATES TIRES sell the best of everything.

About Wrinkles

If the skin be kept soft and smooth, wrinkles may be staved off almost indefinitely. But the question is—How is it possible to achieve this?

*The Natural Way of Preventing Wrinkles
is to use*

Pears' Soap

The soap that was invented 125 years ago for this special purpose, and has never been equalled for its exquisite emollient and skin-vivifying properties.

Its action is at once protective and preservative, maintaining the skin in a healthy condition and retaining its youthful freshness.

*The Great
English
Complexion
Soap*

*Matchless
for the
Complexion*



"All rights secured."

OF ALL SCENTED SOAPS PEAR'S OTTO OF ROSE IS THE BEST.

Perfectly Dressed

From the tips of her tiny shoes to the turned-back brim of her natty bonnet, the Redfern lady bespeaks perfection itself.

Her well-tailored dressy suit hangs straight without a suspicion of the corset beneath.

But the corset is there—a Redfern—admirably shaped and carefully fitted to delineate the beautiful, natural figure lines.

You also should wear a Redfern. The exclusive Redfern models creating the natural resilient figure are shown in all the stores.

Be fitted—a Redfern is authentic style—wherever Redfern Corsets are sold; they are adjusted by experienced fitters.

AT ALL HIGH CLASS STORES

\$3.00 to \$15.00

Redfern
 *Corsets*

The foundation of a perfect fitting gown.



The Warner Brothers Company



All out-doors
invites your Kodak

Catalogue free at your dealer's, or by mail.

EASTMAN KODAK CO., ROCHESTER, N. Y., *The Kodak City.*